

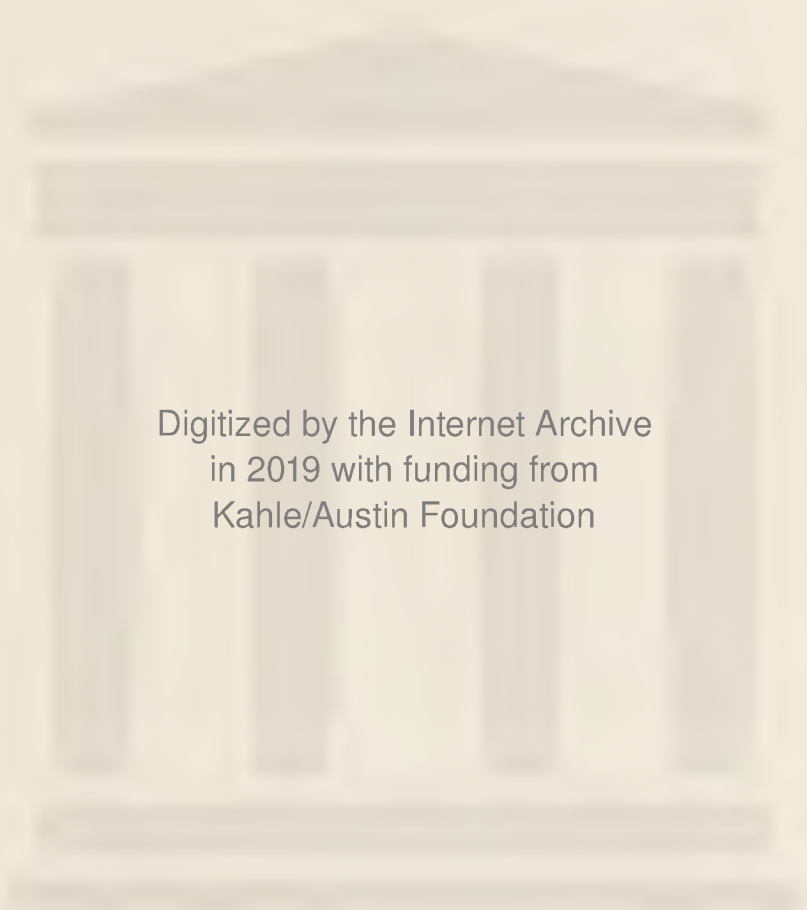
THE
Best
AMERICAN
SHORT STORIES
1961

and The Yearbook of the American Short Story

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and the Yearbook of the American Short Story

Edited by
MARTHA FOLEY and DAVID BURNETT



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To James Baldwin

189966

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT for permission to reprint the stories in this volume is made to the following:

To the Editors of *Accent*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Literary Review*, *Mutiny*, *New Mexico Quarterly*, *New World Writing*, *The New Yorker*, *The Noble Savage*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southwest Review*, *The Tamarack Review*, *The University of Kansas City Review*; and to James Baldwin, John Berry, Alfred Chester, W. H. Gass, Ivan Gold, William Goyen, Mark Harris, Kaatje Hurlbut, Theodore Jacobs, Mary Lavin, Jack Ludwig, Willard Marsh, St. Clair McKelway, Jeannie Olive, Tillie Olsen, William Peden, Thomas Pynchon, Samuel Sandmel, Peter Taylor, and Ellington White.

FOREWORD

"WHEN you touch a book, you touch a man," the father of one of the editors of this collection used to say. He meant, of course, the author of the book. Perhaps today, with the recognized importance of women as well as men writers, he would say, "you touch a human being." His comment had a lasting effect because, ever since she was a very small girl, if the editor accidentally dropped a book she felt she had dropped a living creature and wanted to soothe the book as she picked it up. The readers of this anthology are going to touch many people.

It has been a remarkably rich year for the American short story. So many stories of lasting value have been published that it has been more difficult than usual to make the final selection. Many of the stories, as the reader will notice, are by new writers. Although not applying to this particular collection, it's interesting to note that many of the writers appearing for the first time in magazines are only about twenty years old. If they maintain their promise, we certainly have an exciting period ahead. It's also interesting that so many recent stories, including those in this book, carry such emotional impact. Gone is that school of understatement, that retention of feeling which limited author and reader alike. The younger fiction writers are no longer afraid to show their emotions.

What do you remember most about the stories you have read and liked? Has it not been the characters you came to know? The men and women, even the children, who interested you so much they stayed in your memory? That is why the analogy about touching a man when you touch a book seems apropos when describing the present group of stories. The vanished woman in Peter Taylor's story, the Negro in James Baldwin's story, the mother in Mary Lavin's tale, the marijuana-sickened exile in Willard Marsh's story, the wonderful Jewish couple in Tillie Olsen's story, the man who had never heard Beethoven in John Berry's piece — the list of

memorable characters is far too long to enumerate in a foreword. But the stories are here, so are the people, and we think you are going to remember them a long time.

Arnold Gingrich, the editor of *Esquire*, lamented that he is a bad prophet. He had foreseen a return to Victorianism which did not occur. Such a return was also forecast even earlier in a foreword to one of these collections. But writing about sex continues uninhibited. The editors of this volume do not believe in censorship, and the stories here represented have been chosen for their literary merits only. Actually the stories in this volume happen to be more restrained in their use of sex than most of the pieces appearing in the magazines during the past year. As we have noted already, they are replete with other kinds of emotion.

It is unfortunate that many of the magazines which publish good fiction clutter up their short stories with so much advertising. The reader is worn out as he is taken on long steeplechases through columns and columns and pages and pages of eye-catching trivia. And at the end of all the hurdles and ditches, he may have been able to read what ordinarily would be only two or three pages of a story. Not a few such magazines remain widely looked at but little-read publications. The reader genuinely interested in new fiction must be given a fair chance to enjoy it. The editors hope that this anthology is that chance. And we certainly trust that the reader won't drop this book.

The oldest "little" literary magazine in America is *Prairie Schooner*, founded by Lowry Charles Wimberly in 1927. Mr. Wimberly was one of those who made possible the statement in a Princeton University Press survey that eighty per cent of all American writers first appeared in the "little" magazines. Mr. Wimberly's death was announced in *Prairie Schooner*. In a volume of this sort, his death should not go unnoted or unmourned.

We are grateful to the editors who have kept us supplied with the magazines and to their generous granting of republication rights. The editor of any new magazine is invited to send it along without waiting for permission to do so.

The editors and staff of Houghton Mifflin Company are entitled to especial gratitude for their help. Finally, tribute is gladly paid to Edward J. O'Brien, who founded this anthology.

MARTHA FOLEY and DAVID BURNETT

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THE
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1961

THIS MORNING, THIS EVENING, SO SOON

BY JAMES BALDWIN

YOU ARE full of nightmares," Harriet tells me. She is in her dressing gown and has cream all over her face. She and my older sister, Louisa, are going out to be girls together. I suppose they have many things to talk about — they have *me* to talk about, certainly — and they do not want my presence. I have been given a bachelor's evening. The director of the film which has brought us such incredible and troubling riches will be along later to take me out to dinner.

I watch her face. I know that it is quite impossible for her to be as untroubled as she seems. Her self-control is mainly for my benefit — my benefit, and Paul's. Harriet comes from orderly and progressive Sweden and has reacted against all the advanced doctrines to which she has been exposed by becoming steadily and beautifully old-fashioned. We never fought in front of Paul, not even when he was a baby. Harriet does not so much believe in protecting children as she does in helping them to build a foundation on which they can build and build again, each time life's high-flying steel ball knocks down everything they have built.

Whenever I become upset, Harriet becomes very cheerful and composed. I think she began to learn how to do this over eight years ago, when I returned from my only visit to America. Now, perhaps, it has become something she could not control if she wished to. This morning, at breakfast, when I yelled at Paul, she averted Paul's tears and my own guilt by looking up and saying, "My God, your father is cranky this morning, isn't he?"

Paul's attention was immediately distracted from his wounds, and the unjust inflicter of those wounds, to his mother's laughter. He watched her.

"It is because he is afraid they will not like his songs in New York. Your father is an *artiste, mon chou*, and they are very mysterious people, *les artistes*. Millions of people are waiting for him in New York, they are begging him to come, and they will give him a *lot* of money, but he is afraid they will not like him. Tell him he is wrong."

She succeeded in rekindling Paul's excitement about places he has never seen. I was also, at once, reinvested with all my glamour. I think it is sometimes extremely difficult for Paul to realize that the face he sees on record sleeves and in the newspapers and on the screen is nothing more or less than the face of his father — who sometimes yells at him. Of course, since he is only seven — going on eight, he will be eight years old this winter — he cannot know that I am baffled, too.

"Of course, you are wrong, you are silly," he said with passion — and caused me to smile. His English is strongly accented and is not, in fact, as good as his French, for he speaks French all day at school. French is really his first language, the first he ever heard. "You are the greatest singer in France" — sounding exactly as he must sound when he makes this pronouncement to his schoolmates — "the greatest *American* singer" — this concession was so gracefully made that it was not a concession at all, it added inches to my stature, America being only a glamorous word for Paul. It is the place from which his father came, and to which he now is going, a place which very few people have ever seen. But his aunt is one of them and he looked over at her. "Mme. Dumont says so, and she says he is a *great actor, too*." Louisa nodded, smiling. "And she has seen *Les Fauves Nous Attendent* — five times!" This clinched it, of course. Mme. Dumont is our concierge and she has known Paul all his life. I suppose he will not begin to doubt anything she says until he begins to doubt everything.

He looked over at me again. "So you are wrong to be afraid."

"I was wrong to yell at you, too. I won't yell at you any more today."

"All right." He was very grave.

Louisa poured more coffee. "He's going to knock them dead in New York. You'll see."

"*Mais bien sûr*," said Paul, doubtfully. He does not quite know what "knock them dead" means, though he was sure, from her tone, that she must have been agreeing with him. He does not quite understand this aunt, whom he met for the first time two months ago, when she arrived to spend the summer with us. Her accent is entirely different from anything he has ever heard. He does not really understand why, since she is my sister and his aunt, she should be unable to speak French.

Harriet, Louisa, and I looked at each other and smiled. "Knock them dead," said Harriet, "means *d'avoir un succès fou*. But you will soon pick up all the American expressions." She looked at me and laughed. "So will I."

"That's what he's afraid of." Louisa grinned. "We have got some expressions, believe me. Don't let anybody ever tell you America hasn't got a culture. Our culture is as thick as clabber milk."

"Ah," Harriet answered, "I know. I know."

"I'm going to be practicing later," I told Paul.

His face lit up. "*Bon*." This meant that, later, he would come into my study and lie on the floor with his papers and crayons while I worked out with the piano and the tape recorder. He knew that I was offering this as an olive branch. All things considered, we get on pretty well, my son and I.

He looked over at Louisa again. She held a coffee cup in one hand and a cigarette in the other; and something about her baffled him. It was early, so she had not yet put on her face. Her short, thick, graying hair was rougher than usual, almost as rough as my own — later, she would be going to the hairdresser's; she is fairer than I, and better-looking; Louisa, in fact, caught all the looks in the family. Paul knows that she is my older sister and that she helped to raise me, though he does not, of course, know what this means. He knows that she is a schoolteacher in the *American South*, which is not, for some reason, the same place as South America. I could see him trying to fit all these exotic details together into a pattern which would explain her strangeness — strangeness of accent, strangeness of manner. In comparison with

the people he has always known, Louisa must seem, for all her generosity and laughter and affection, peculiarly uncertain of herself, peculiarly hostile and embattled.

I wondered what he would think of his Uncle Norman, older and much blacker than I, who lives near the Alabama town in which we were born. Norman will meet us at the boat.

Now Harriet repeats, "Nightmares, nightmares. Nothing ever turns out as badly as you think it will — in fact," she adds laughing, "I am happy to say that that would scarcely be possible."

Her eyes seek mine in the mirror — dark blue eyes, pale skin, black hair. I had always thought of Sweden as being populated entirely by blondes, and I thought that Harriet was abnormally dark for a Swedish girl. But when we visited Sweden, I found out differently. "It is all a great racial salad, Europe, that is why I am sure that I will never understand your country," Harriet said. That was in the days when we never imagined that we would be going to it.

I wonder what she is really thinking. Still, she is right, in two days we will be on a boat, and there is simply no point in carrying around my load of apprehension. I sit down on the bed, watching her fix her face. I realize that I am going to miss this old-fashioned bedroom. For years, we've talked about throwing out the old junk which came with the apartment and replacing it with less massive, modern furniture. But we never have.

"Oh, everything will probably work out," I say. "I've been in a bad mood all day long. I just can't sing any more." We both laugh. She reaches for a wad of tissues and begins wiping off the cream. "I wonder how Paul will like it, if he'll make friends — that's all."

"Paul will like any place where you are, where we are. Don't worry about Paul."

Paul has never been called any names, so far. Only, once he asked us what the word *meétis* meant and Harriet explained to him that it meant mixed blood, adding that the blood of just about everybody in the world was mixed by now. Mme. Dumont contributed bawdy and detailed corroboration from her own family tree, the roots of which were somewhere in Corsica; the moral of the story, as she told it, was that women were weak, men incorrigible, and *le bon Dieu* appallingly clever. Mme. Dumont's ver-

sion is the version I prefer, but it may not be, for Paul, the most utilitarian.

Harriet rises from the dressing table and comes over to sit in my lap. I fall back with her on the bed, and she smiles down into my face.

"Now, don't worry," she tells me, "please try not to worry. Whatever is coming, we will manage it all very well, you will see. We have each other and we have our son and we know what we want. So, we are luckier than most people."

I kiss her on the chin. "I'm luckier than most men."

"I'm a very lucky woman, too."

And for a moment we are silent, alone in our room, which we have shared so long. The slight rise and fall of Harriet's breathing creates an intermittent pressure against my chest, and I think how, if I had never left America, I would never have met her and would never have established a life of my own, would never have entered my own life. For everyone's life begins on a level where races, armies, and churches stop. And yet everyone's life is always shaped by races, churches, and armies; races, churches, armies menace, and have taken, many lives. If Harriet had been born in America, it would have taken her a long time, perhaps forever, to look on me as a man like other men; if I had met her in America, I would never have been able to look on her as a woman like all other women. The habits of public rage and power would also have been our private compulsions, and would have blinded our eyes. We would never have been able to love each other. And Paul would never have been born.

Perhaps, if I had stayed in America, I would have found another woman and had another son. But that other woman, that other son are in the limbo of vanished possibilities. I might also have become something else, instead of an actor-singer, perhaps a lawyer, like my brother, or a teacher, like my sister. But no, I am what I have become and this woman beside me is my wife, and I love her. All the sons I might have had mean nothing, since I *have* a son, I named him, Paul, for my father, and I love him.

I think of all the things I have seen destroyed in America, all the things that I have lost there, all the threats it holds for me and mine.

I grin up at Harriet. "Do you love me?"

"Of course not. I simply have been madly plotting to get to America all these years."

"What a patient wench you are."

"The Swedes are very patient."

She kisses me again and stands up. Louisa comes in, also in a dressing gown.

"I hope you two aren't sitting in here yakking about the *subject*." She looks at me. "My, you are the sorriest-looking celebrity I've ever seen. I've always wondered why people like you hired press agents. Now I know." She goes to Harriet's dressing table. "Honey, do you mind if I borrow some of that *mad* nail polish?"

Harriet goes over to the dressing table. "I'm not sure I know *which* mad nail polish you mean."

Harriet and Louisa, somewhat to my surprise, get on very well. Each seems to find the other full of the weirdest and most delightful surprises. Harriet has been teaching Louisa French and Swedish expressions, and Louisa has been teaching Harriet some of the saltier expressions of the black South. Whenever one of them is not playing straight man to the other's accent, they become involved in long speculations as to how a language reveals the history and the attitudes of a people. They discovered that all the European languages contain a phrase equivalent to "to work like a nigger." ("Of course," says Louisa, "they've had black men working for them for a long time.") "Language is experience and language is power," says Louisa, after regretting that she does not know any of the African dialects. "That's what I keep trying to tell those dicty bastards down South. They get their own experience into the language, we'll have a great language. But, no, they all want to talk like white folks." Then she leans forward, grasping Harriet by the knee. "I tell them, honey, white folks ain't saying *nothing*. Not a thing are they saying — and *some* of them know it, they *need* what you got, the whole world needs it." Then she leans back, in disgust. "You think they listen to me? Indeed they do not. They just go right on, trying to talk like white folks." She leans forward again, in tremendous indignation. "You know some of them folks are *ashamed* of Mahalia Jackson? *Ashamed* of her, one of the greatest singers alive! They think she's common." Then she looks about the room as though she held a bottle in her hand and were looking for a skull to crack.

I think it is because Louisa has never been able to talk like this to any white person before. All the white people she has ever met needed, in one way or another, to be reassured, consoled, to have their consciences pricked but not blasted; could not, could not afford to hear a truth which would shatter, irrevocably, their image of themselves. It is astonishing the lengths to which a person, or a people, will go in order to avoid a truthful mirror. But Harriet's necessity is precisely the opposite: it is of the utmost importance that she learn everything that Louisa can tell her, and then learn more, much more. Harriet is really trying to learn from Louisa how best to protect her husband and her son. This is why they are going out alone tonight. They will have, tonight, as it were, a final council of war. I may be moody, but they, thank God, are practical.

Now Louisa turns to me while Harriet rummages about on the dressing table. "What time is Vidal coming for you?"

"Oh, around seven-thirty, eight o'clock. He says he's reserved tables for us in some very chic place, but he won't say where." Louisa wriggles her shoulders, raises her eyebrows, and does a tiny bump and grind. I laugh. "That's right. And then I guess we'll go out and get drunk."

"I hope to God you do. You've been about as cheerful as a cemetery these last few days. And, that way, your hangover will keep you from bugging us tomorrow."

"What about *your* hangovers? I know the way you girls drink."

"Well, we'll be paying for our own drinks," says Harriet, "so I don't think we'll have that problem. But *you're* going to be feted, like an international movie star."

"You sure you don't want to change your mind and come out with Vidal and me?"

"We're sure," Louisa says. She looks down at me and gives a small, amused grunt. "An international movie star. And I used to change your diapers. I'll be damned." She is grave for a moment. "Mama'd be proud of you, you know that?" We look at each other and the air between us is charged with secrets which not even Harriet will ever know. "Now, get the hell out of here, so we can get dressed."

"I'll take Paul on down to Mme. Dumont's."

Paul is to have supper with her children and spend the night there.

"For the last time," says Mme. Dumont and she rubs her hand over Paul's violently curly black hair. "*Tu vas nous manquer, tu sais?*" Then she looks up at me and laughs. "He doesn't care. He is only interested in seeing the big ship and all the wonders of New York. Children are never sad to make journeys."

"I would be very sad to go," says Paul, politely, "but my father must go to New York to work and he wants me to come with him."

Over his head, Mme. Dumont and I smile at each other. "*Il est malin, ton gosse!*" She looks down at him again. "And do you think, my little diplomat, that you will like New York?"

"We aren't only going to New York," Paul answers, "we are going to California, too."

"Well, do you think you will like California?"

Paul looks at me. "I don't know. If we don't like it, we'll come back."

"So simple. Just like that," says Mme. Dumont. She looks at me. "It is the best way to look at life. Do come back. You know, we feel that you belong to us, too, here in France."

"I hope you do," I say. "I hope you do. I have always felt — always felt at home here." I bend down and Paul and I kiss each other on the cheek. We have always done so — but will we be able to do so in America? American fathers never kiss American sons. I straighten, my hand on Paul's shoulder. "You be good. I'll pick you up for breakfast, or, if you get up first you come and pick me up and we can hang out together tomorrow, while your *maman* and your Aunt Louisa finish packing. They won't want two men hanging around the house."

"*D'accord*. Where shall we hang out?" On the last two words he stumbles a little and imitates me.

"Maybe we can go to the zoo, I don't know. And I'll take you to lunch at the Eiffel Tower, would you like that?"

"Oh, yes," he says, "I'd love that." When he is pleased, he seems to glow. All the energy of his small, tough, concentrated being charges an unseen battery and adds an incredible luster to his eyes, which are large and dark brown — like mine — and to his skin, which always reminds me of the colors of honey and the fires of the sun.

"Okay, then." I shake hands with Mme. Dumont. "*Bonsoir*,

madame." I ring for the elevator, staring at Paul. "*Ciao, Pauli.*" "*Bonsoir, Papa.*"

And Mme. Dumont takes him inside.

Upstairs, Harriet and Louisa are finally powdered, perfumed, and jeweled, and ready to go: dry martinis at the Ritz, supper, "in some *very* expensive little place," says Harriet, and perhaps the Folies Bergère afterwards. "A real cornball, tourist evening," says Louisa. "I'm working on the theory that if I can get Harriet to act like an American now, she won't have so much trouble later."

"I very much doubt," Harriet says, "that I will be able to endure the Folies Bergère for three solid hours."

"Oh, then we'll duck across town to Harry's New York bar and drink mint juleps," says Louisa.

I realize that, quite apart from everything else, Louisa is having as much fun as she has ever had in her life before. Perhaps she, too, will be sad to leave Paris, even though she has only known it for such a short time.

"Do people drink those in New York?" Harriet asks. I think she is making a list of the things people do or do not do in New York.

"*Some* people do." Louisa winks at me. "Do you realize that this Swedish chick's picked up an Alabama drawl?"

We laugh together. The elevator chugs to a landing.

"We'll stop and say good night to Paul," Harriet says. She kisses me. "Give our best to Vidal."

"Right. Have a good time. Don't let any Frenchmen run off with Louisa."

"I did not come to Paris to be protected, and if I had, this wild chick *you* married couldn't do it. I just *might* upset everybody and come home with a French count." She presses the elevator button and the cage goes down.

I walk back into our dismantled apartment. It stinks of departure. There are bags and crates in the hall, which will be taken away tomorrow, there are no books in the bookcases, the kitchen looks as though we never cooked a meal there, never dawdled there, in the early morning or late at night, over coffee. Presently, I must shower and shave but now I pour myself a drink and light a cigarette and step out on our balcony. It is dusk, the brilliant light of Paris is beginning to fade, and the green of the trees is darkening.

I have lived in this city for twelve years. This apartment is on the top floor of a corner building. We look out over the trees and the roof tops to the Champ de Mars, where the Eiffel Tower stands. Beyond this field is the river, which I have crossed so often, in so many states of mind. I have crossed every bridge in Paris, I have walked along every *quai*. I know the river as one finally knows a friend, know it when it is black, guarding all the lights of Paris in its depths, and seeming, in its vast silence, to be communing with the dead who lie beneath it; when it is yellow, evil, and roaring, giving a rough time to tugboats and barges, and causing people to remember that it has been known to rise, it has been known to kill; when it is peaceful, a slick, dark, dirty green, playing host to rowboats and *les bateaux mouches* and throwing up from time to time an extremely unhealthy fish. The men who stand along the *quais* all summer with their fishing lines gratefully accept the slimy object and throw it in a rusty can. I have always wondered who eats those fish.

And I walk up and down, up and down, glad to be alone.

It is August, the month when all Parisians desert Paris and one has to walk miles to find a barbershop or a laundry open in some tree-shadowed, silent side street. There is a single person on the avenue, a paratrooper walking toward École Militaire. He is also walking, almost certainly, and rather sooner than later, toward Algeria. I have a friend, a good-natured boy who was always hanging around the clubs in which I worked in the old days, who has just returned from Algeria, with a recurring, debilitating fever, and minus one eye. The government has set his pension at the sum, arbitrary if not occult, of fifty-three thousand francs every three months. Of course, it is quite impossible to live on this amount of money without working — but who will hire a half-blind invalid? This boy has been spoiled forever, long before his thirtieth birthday, and there are thousands like him all over France.

And there are fewer Algerians to be found on the streets of Paris now. The rug sellers, the peanut venders, the postcard peddlers and money-changers have vanished. The boys I used to know during my first years in Paris are scattered — or corralled — the Lord knows where.

Most of them had no money. They lived three and four together in rooms with a single skylight, a single hard cot, or in buildings

that seemed abandoned, with cardboard in the windows, with erratic plumbing in a wet, cobblestoned yard, in dark, dead-end alleys, or on the outer, chilling heights of Paris.

The Arab cafés are closed — those dark, acrid cafés in which I used to meet with them to drink tea, to get high on hashish, to listen to the obsessive, stringed music which has no relation to any beat, any time, that I have ever known. I once thought of the North Africans as my brothers and that is why I went to their cafés. They were very friendly to me, perhaps one or two of them remained really fond of me even after I could no longer afford to smoke Lucky Strikes and after my collection of American sport shirts had vanished — mostly into their wardrobes. They seemed to feel that they had every right to them, since I could only have wrested these things from the world by cunning — it meant nothing to say that I had had no choice in the matter; perhaps I had wrested these things from the world by treason, by refusing to be identified with the misery of my people. Perhaps, indeed, I identified myself with those who were responsible for this misery.

And this was true. Their rage, the only note in all their music which I could not fail to recognize, to which I responded, yet had the effect of setting us more than ever at a division. They were perfectly prepared to drive all Frenchmen into the sea, and to level the city of Paris. But I could not hate the French, because they left me alone. And I love Paris, I will always love it, it is the city which saved my life. It saved my life by allowing me to find out who I am.

It was on a bridge, one tremendous April morning, that I knew I had fallen in love. Harriet and I were walking hand in hand. The bridge was the Pont Royal, just before us was the great *horloge*, high and lifted up, saying ten to ten; beyond this, the golden statue of Joan of Arc, with her sword uplifted. Harriet and I were silent, for we had been quarreling about something. Now, when I look back, I think we had reached that state when an affair must either end or become something more than an affair.

I looked sideways at Harriet's face, which was still. Her dark blue eyes were narrowed against the sun, and her full, pink lips were still slightly sulky, like a child's. In those days, she hardly ever wore make-up. I was in my shirt sleeves. Her face made me want

to laugh and run my hand over her short dark hair. I wanted to pull her to me and say, *Baby, don't be mad at me*, and at that moment something tugged at my heart and made me catch my breath. There were millions of people all around us, but I was alone with Harriet. She was alone with me. Never, in all my life, until that moment, had I been alone with anyone. The world had always been with us, between us, defeating the quarrel we could not achieve, and making love impossible. During all the years of my life, until that moment, I had carried the menacing, the hostile, killing world with me everywhere. No matter what I was doing or saying or feeling, one eye had always been on the world — that world which I had learned to distrust almost as soon as I learned my name, that world on which I knew one could never turn one's back, the white man's world. And for the first time in my life I was free of it; it had not existed for me; I had been quarreling with my girl. It was our quarrel, it was entirely between us, it had nothing to do with anyone else in the world. For the first time in my life I had not been afraid of the patriotism of the mindless, in uniform or out, who would beat me up and treat the woman who was with me as though she were the lowest of untouchables. For the first time in my life I felt that no force jeopardized my right, my power, to possess and to protect a woman; for the first time, the first time, felt that the woman was not, in her own eyes or in the eyes of the world, degraded by my presence.

The sun fell over everything, like a blessing, people were moving all about us, I will never forget the feeling of Harriet's small hand in mine, dry and trusting, and I turned to her, slowing our pace. She looked up at me with her enormous blue eyes, and she seemed to wait. I said, "*Harriet. Harriet. Tu sais, il y a quelque chose de très grave qui m'est arrivé. Je t'aime. Je t'aime. Tu me comprends*, or shall I say it in English?"

This was eight years ago, shortly before my first and only visit home.

That was when my mother died. I stayed in America for three months. When I came back, Harriet thought that the change in me was due to my grief — I was very silent, very thin. But it had not been my mother's death which accounted for the change. I had known that my mother was going to die. I had not known what America would be like for me after nearly four years away.

I remember standing at the rail and watching the distance between myself and Le Havre increase. Hands fell, ceasing to wave, handkerchiefs ceased to flutter, people turned away, they mounted their bicycles or got into their cars and rode off. Soon, Le Havre was nothing but a blur. I thought of Harriet, already miles from me in Paris, and I pressed my lips tightly together in order not to cry.

Then, as Europe dropped below the water, as the days passed and passed, as we left behind us the skies of Europe and the eyes of everyone on the ship began, so to speak, to refocus, waiting for the first glimpse of America, my apprehension began to give way to a secret joy, a checked anticipation. I thought of such details as showers, which are rare in Paris, and I thought of such things as rich, cold, American milk and heavy, chocolate cake. I wondered about my friends, wondered if I had any left, and wondered if they would be glad to see me.

The Americans on the boat did not seem to be so bad, but I was fascinated, after such a long absence from it, by the nature of their friendliness. It was a friendliness which did not suggest, and was not intended to suggest, any possibility of friendship. Unlike Europeans, they dropped titles and used first names almost at once, leaving themselves, unlike the Europeans, with nowhere thereafter to go. Once one had become "Pete" or "Jane" or "Bill" all that could decently be known was known and any suggestion that there might be further depths, a person, so to speak, behind the name, was taken as a violation of that privacy which did not, paradoxically, since they trusted it so little, seem to exist among Americans. They apparently equated privacy with the unspeakable things they did in the bathroom or the bedroom, which they related only to the analyst, and then read about in the pages of best sellers. There was an eerie and unnerving irreality about everything they said and did, as though they were all members of the same team and were acting on orders from some invincibly cheerful and tirelessly inventive coach. I was fascinated by it. I found it oddly moving, but I cannot say that I was displeased. It had not occurred to me before that Americans, who had never treated me with any respect, had no respect for each other.

On the last night but one, there was a gala in the big ballroom and I sang. It had been a long time since I had sung before so

many Americans. My audience had mainly been penniless French students, in the weird Left Bank bistros I worked in those days. Still, I was a great hit with them and by this time I had become enough of a drawing card, in the Latin Quarter and in St.-Germain-des-Prés, to have attracted a couple of critics, to have had my picture in *France-soir*, and to have acquired a legal work permit which allowed me to make a little more money. Just the same, no matter how industrious and brilliant some of the musicians had been, or how devoted my audience, they did not know, they could not know, what my songs came out of. They did not know what was funny about it. It was impossible to translate: It damn well better be funny, or Laughing to keep from crying, or What did *I* do to be so black and blue?

The moment I stepped out on the floor, they began to smile, something opened in them, they were ready to be pleased. I found in their faces, as they watched me, smiling, waiting, an artless relief, a profound reassurance. Nothing was more familiar to them than the sight of a dark boy, singing, and there were few things on earth more necessary. It was under cover of darkness, my own darkness, that I could sing for them of the joys, passions, and terrors they smuggled about with them like steadily depreciating contraband. Under cover of the midnight fiction that I was unlike them because I was black, they could stealthily gaze at those treasures which they had been mysteriously forbidden to possess and were never permitted to declare.

I sang "*I'm Coming, Virginia,*" and "*Take This Hammer,*" and "*Precious Lord.*" They wouldn't let me go and I came back and sang a couple of the oldest blues I knew. Then someone asked me to sing "*Swanee River,*" and I did, astonished that I could, astonished that this song, which I had put down long ago, should have the power to move me. Then, if only, perhaps, to make the record complete, I wanted to sing "*Strange Fruit,*" but, on this number, no one can surpass the great, tormented Billie Holiday. So I finished with "*Great Getting-Up Morning*" and I guess I can say that if I didn't stop the show I certainly ended it. I got a big hand and I drank at a few tables and I danced with a few girls.

After one more day and one more night, the boat landed in New York. I woke up, I was bright awake at once, and I thought, *We're*

here. I turned on all the lights in my small cabin and I stared into the mirror as though I were committing my face to memory. I took a shower and I took a long time shaving and I dressed myself very carefully. I walked the long ship corridors to the dining room, looking at the luggage piled high before the elevators and beside the steps. The dining room was nearly half empty and full of a quick and joyous excitement which depressed me even more. People ate quickly, chattering to each other, anxious to get upstairs and go on deck. Was it my imagination or was it true that they seemed to avoid my eyes? A few people waved and smiled, but let me pass; perhaps it would have made them uncomfortable, this morning, to try to share their excitement with me; perhaps they did not want to know whether or not it was possible for me to share it. I walked to my table and sat down. I munched toast as dry as paper and drank a pot of coffee. Then I tipped my waiter, who bowed and smiled and called me "sir" and said that he hoped to see me on the boat again. "I hope so, too," I said.

And was it true, or was it my imagination, that a flash of wondering comprehension, a flicker of wry sympathy, then appeared in the waiter's eyes? I walked upstairs to the deck.

There was a breeze from the water but the sun was hot and made me remember how ugly New York summers could be. All of the deck chairs had been taken away and people milled about in the space where the deck chairs had been, moved from one side of the ship to the other, clambered up and down the steps, crowded the rails, and they were busy taking photographs — of the harbor, of each other, of the sea, of the gulls. I walked slowly along the deck, and an impulse stronger than myself drove me to the rail. There it was, the great, unfinished city, with all its towers blazing in the sun. It came toward us slowly and patiently, like some enormous, cunning, and murderous beast, ready to devour, impossible to escape. I watched it come closer and I listened to the people around me, to their excitement and their pleasure. There was no doubt that it was real. I watched their shining faces and wondered if I were mad. For a moment I longed, with all my heart, to be able to feel whatever they were feeling, if only to know what such a feeling was like. As the boat moved slowly into the harbor, they were being moved into safety. It was only I who was being floated into danger. I turned my head, looking for Europe, but all that stretched behind

me was the sky, thick with gulls. I moved away from the rail. A big, sandy-haired man held his daughter on his shoulders, showing her the Statue of Liberty. I would never know what this statue meant to others, she had always been an ugly joke for me. And the American flag was flying from the top of the ship, above my head. I had seen the French flag drive the French into the most unspeakable frenzies, I had seen the flag which was nominally mine used to dignify the vilest purposes: now I would never, as long as I lived, know what others saw when they saw a flag. "There's no place like home," said a voice close by, and I thought, *There damn sure isn't*. I decided to go back to my cabin and have a drink.

There was a cablegram from Harriet in my cabin. It said: Be good. Be quick. I'm waiting. I folded it carefully and put it in my breast pocket. Then I wondered if I would ever get back to her. How long would it take me to earn the money to get out of this land? Sweat broke out on my forehead and I poured myself some whisky from my nearly empty bottle. I paced the tiny cabin. It was silent. There was no one down in the cabins now.

I was not sober when I faced the uniforms in the first-class lounge. There were two of them; they were not unfriendly. They looked at my passport, they looked at me. "You've been away a long time," said one of them.

"Yes," I said, "it's been a while."

"What did you do over there all that time?" — with a grin meant to hide more than it revealed, which hideously revealed more than it could hide.

I said, "I'm a singer," and the room seemed to rock around me. I held on to what I hoped was a calm, open smile. I had not had to deal with these faces in so long that I had forgotten how to do it. I had once known how to pitch my voice precisely between curtness and servility, and known what razor's edge of a pickaninny's smile would turn away wrath. But I had forgotten all the tricks on which my life had once depended. Once I had been an expert at baffling these people, at setting their teeth on edge, and dancing just outside the trap laid for me. But I was not an expert now. These faces were no longer merely the faces of two white men, who were my enemies. They were the faces of two white people whom

I did not understand, and I could no longer plan my moves in accordance with what I knew of their cowardice and their needs and their strategy. That moment on the bridge had undone me forever.

"That's right," said one of them, "that's what it says, right here on the passport. Never heard of you, though." They looked up at me. "Did you do a lot of singing over there?"

"Some."

"What kind — concerts?"

"No." I wondered what I looked like, sounded like. I could tell nothing from their eyes. "I worked a few night clubs."

"Night clubs, eh? I guess they liked you over there."

"Yes," I said, "they seemed to like me all right."

"Well" — and my passport was stamped and handed back to me — "let's hope they like you over here."

"Thanks." They laughed — was it at me, or was it my imagination? — and I picked up the one bag I was carrying and threw my trench coat over one shoulder and walked out of the first-class lounge. I stood in the slow-moving, murmuring line which led to the gangplank. I looked straight ahead and watched heads, smiling faces, step up to the shadow of the gangplank awning and then swiftly descend out of sight. I put my passport back in my breast pocket — *Be quick. I'm waiting* — and I held my landing card in my hand. Then, suddenly, there I was, standing on the edge of the boat, staring down the long ramp to the ground. At the end of the plank, on the ground, stood a heavy man in a uniform. His cap was pushed back from his gray hair and his face was red and wet. He looked up at me. This was the face I remembered, the face of my nightmares; perhaps hatred had caused me to know this face better than I would ever know the face of any lover. "Come on, boy," he cried, "come on, come on!"

And I almost smiled. I was home. I touched my breast pocket. I thought of a song I sometimes sang, "When will I ever get to be a man?" I came down the gangplank, stumbling a little, and gave the man my landing card.

Much later in the day, a customs inspector checked my baggage and waved me away. I picked up my bags and started walking down the long stretch which led to the gate, to the city.

And I heard someone call my name.

I looked up and saw Louisa running toward me. I dropped my bags and grabbed her in my arms and tears came to my eyes and rolled down my face. I did not know whether the tears were for joy at seeing her, or from rage, or both.

"How are you? How are you? You look wonderful, but, oh, haven't you lost weight? It's wonderful to see you again."

I wiped my eyes. "It's wonderful to see you, too, I bet you thought I was never coming back."

Louisa laughed. "I wouldn't have blamed you if you hadn't. These people are just as corny as ever, I swear I don't believe there's any hope for them. How's your French? Lord, when I think that it was I who studied French and now I can't speak a word. And you never went near it and you probably speak it like a native."

I grinned. "*Pas mal. Je me défends pas mal.*" We started down the wide steps into the street. "My God," I said. "New York." I was not aware of its towers now. We were in the shadow of the elevated highway but the thing which most struck me was neither light nor shade, but noise. It came from a million things at once, from trucks and tires and clutches and brakes and doors; from machines shuttling and stamping and rolling and cutting and pressing; from the building of tunnels, the checking of gas mains, the laying of wires, the digging of foundations; from the chattering of rivets, the scream of the pile driver, the clanging of great shovels; from the battering down and the raising up of walls; from millions of radios and television sets and jukeboxes. The human voices distinguished themselves from the roar only by their note of strain and hostility. Another fleshy man, uniformed and red-faced, hailed a cab for us and touched his cap politely but could only manage a peremptory growl: "Right this way, miss. Step up, sir." He slammed the cab door behind us. Louisa directed the driver to the New Yorker Hotel.

"Do they take us there?"

She looked at me. "They got laws in New York, honey, it'd be the easiest thing in the world to spend all your time in court. But over at the New Yorker, I believe they've already got the message." She took my arm. "You see? In spite of all this chopping and booming, this place hasn't really changed very much. You still can't hear yourself talk."

And I thought to myself, Maybe that's the point.

Early the next morning we checked out of the hotel and took the plane for Alabama.

I am just stepping out of the shower when I hear the bell ring. I dry myself hurriedly and put on a bathrobe. It is Vidal, of course, and very elegant he is, too, with his bushy gray hair quite lustrous, his swarthy, cynical, gypsylike face shaved and lotioned. Usually he looks just any old way. But tonight his brief bulk is contained in a dark blue suit and he has an ironical pearl stickpin in his blue tie.

"Come in, make yourself a drink. I'll be with you in a second."

"I am, *hélas!* on time. I trust you will forgive me for my thoughtlessness."

But I am already back in the bathroom. Vidal puts on a record: Mahalia Jackson, singing "I'm Going to Live the Life I Sing About in My Song."

When I am dressed, I find him sitting in a chair before the open window. The daylight is gone, but it is not exactly dark. The trees are black now against the darkening sky. The lights in windows and the lights of motorcars are yellow and ringed. The street lights have not yet been turned on. It is as though, out of deference to the departed day, Paris waited a decent interval before assigning her role to a more theatrical but inferior performer.

Vidal is drinking a whisky and soda. I pour myself a drink. He watches me.

"Well. How are you, my friend? You are nearly gone. Are you happy to be leaving us?"

"No." I say this with more force than I had intended. Vidal raises his eyebrows, looking amused and distant. "I never really intended to go back there. I certainly never intended to raise my kid there —"

"*Mais, mon cher,*" Vidal says, calmly, "you are an intelligent man, you must have known that you would probably be returning one day." He pauses. "And, as for Pauli — did it never occur to you that he might wish one day to see the country in which his father and his father's fathers were born?"

"To do that, really, he'd have to go to Africa."

"America will always mean more to him than Africa, you know that."

"I don't know." I throw my drink down and pour myself another. "Why should he want to cross all that water just to be called a nigger? America never gave him anything."

"It gave him his father."

I look at him. "You mean, his father escaped."

Vidal throws back his head and laughs. If Vidal likes you, he is certain to laugh at you and his laughter can be very unnerving. But the look, the silence which follow this laughter can be very unnerving, too. And, now, in the silence, he asks me, "Do you really think that you have escaped anything? Come. I know you for a better man than that." He walks to the table which holds the liquor. "In that movie of ours which has made you so famous, and, as I now see, so troubled, what are you playing, after all? What is the tragedy of this half-breed troubadour if not, precisely, that he has taken all the possible roads to escape and that all these roads have failed him?" He pauses, with the bottle in one hand, and looks at me. "Do you remember the trouble I had to get a performance out of you? How you hated me, you sometimes looked as though you wanted to shoot me! And do you remember when the role of Chico began to come alive?" He pours his drink. "Think back, remember. I am a very great director, *mais pardon!* I could not have got such a performance out of anyone but you. And what were you thinking of, what was in your mind, what nightmare were you living with when you began, at last, to play the role — truthfully?" He walks back to his seat.

Chico, in the film, is the son of a Martinique woman and a French *colon* who hates both his mother and his father. He flees from the island to the capital, carrying his hatred with him. This hatred has now grown, naturally, to include all dark women and all white men, in a word, everyone. He descends into the underworld of Paris, where he dies. *Les fauves* — the wild beasts — refers to the life he has fled and to the life which engulfs him. When I agreed to do the role, I felt that I could probably achieve it by bearing in mind the North Africans I had watched in Paris for so long. But this did not please Vidal. The blowup came while we were rehearsing a fairly simple, straightforward scene. Chico goes into a sleazy Pigalle dance hall to beg the French owner for a particularly humiliating job. And this Frenchman reminds him of his father.

"You are playing this boy as though you thought of him as the noble savage," Vidal said, icily. "*Ça vient d'où* — all these ghastly mannerisms you are using all the time?"

Everyone fell silent, for Vidal rarely spoke this way. This silence told me that everyone, the actor with whom I was playing the scene and all the people in the "dance hall," shared Vidal's opinion of my performance and was relieved that he was going to do something about it. I was humiliated and too angry to speak; but perhaps I also felt, at the very bottom of my heart, a certain relief, an unwilling respect.

"You are doing it all wrong," he said, more gently. Then, "Come, let us have a drink together."

We walked into his office. He took a bottle and two glasses out of his desk. "Forgive me, but you put me in mind of some of those English *lady* actresses who love to play *putain* as long as it is always absolutely clear to the audience that they are really ladies. So perhaps they read a book, not usually, *hélas!* *Fanny Hill*, and they have their chauffeurs drive them through Soho once or twice — and they come to the stage with a performance so absolutely loaded with detail, every bit of it meaningless, that there can be no doubt that they are acting. It is what the British call a triumph." He poured two cognacs. "That is what you are doing. Why? Who do you think this boy is, what do you think he is feeling, when he asks for this job?" He watched me carefully and I bitterly resented his look. "You come from America. The situation is not so pretty there for boys like you. I know you may not have been as poor as — as some — but is it really impossible for you to understand what a boy like Chico feels? Have you never, yourself, been in a similar position?"

I hated him for asking the question because I knew he knew the answer to it. "I would have had to be a very lucky black man not to have been in such a position."

"You would have had to be a very lucky *man*."

"Oh, God," I said, "please don't give me any of this equality-in-anguish business."

"It is perfectly possible," he said, sharply, "that there is not another kind."

Then he was silent. He sat down behind his desk. He cut a cigar and lit it, puffing up clouds of smoke, as though to prevent us from

seeing each other too clearly. "Consider this," he said. "I am a French director who has never seen your country. I have never done you any harm, except, perhaps, historically — I mean, because I am white — but I cannot be blamed for that —"

"But *I* can be," I said, "and I am! I've never understood why, if *I* have to pay for the history written in the color of my skin, *you* should get off scot-free!" But I was surprised at my vehemence, I had not known I was going to say these things, and by the fact that I was trembling and from the way he looked at me I knew that, from a professional point of view anyway, I was playing into his hands.

"What makes you think I *do*?" His face looked weary and stern. "I am a Frenchman. Look at France. You think that I — we — are not paying for our history?" He walked to the window, staring out at the rather grim little town in which the studio was located. "If it is revenge that you want, well, then, let me tell you, you will have it. You will probably have it, whether you want it or not, our stupidity will make it inevitable." He turned back into the room. "But I beg you not to confuse me with the happy people of your country, who scarcely know that there is such a thing as history and so, naturally, imagine that they can escape, as you put it, scot-free. That is what you are doing, that is what I was about to say. I was about to say that I am a French director and I have never been in your country and I have never done you any harm — but you are not talking to that man, in this room, now. You are not talking to Jean Luc Vidal, but to some other white man, whom you remember, who has nothing to do with me." He paused and went back to his desk. "Oh, most of the time you are not like this, I know. But it is there all the time, it must be, because when you are upset, this is what comes out. So you are not playing Chico truthfully, you are lying about him, and I will not let you do it. When you go back, now, and play this scene again, I want you to remember what has just happened in this room. You brought your past into this room. That is what Chico does when he walks into the dance hall. The Frenchman whom he begs for a job is not merely a Frenchman — he is the father who disowned and betrayed him and all the Frenchmen whom he hates." He smiled and poured me another cognac. "Ah! If it were not for *my* history, I would not have so much trouble to get the truth out of you." He looked into my face, half smiling. "And you, you are angry — are you not? — that I *ask* you

for the truth. You think I have no right to ask." Then he said something which he knew would enrage me. "Who are you then, and what good has it done you to come to France, and how will you raise your son? Will you teach him never to tell the truth to anyone?" And he moved behind his desk and looked at me, as though from behind a barricade.

"You have no right to talk to me this way."

"Oh, yes, I do," he said. "I have a film to make and a reputation to maintain and I am going to get a performance out of you." He looked at his watch. "Let us go back to work."

I watch him now, sitting quietly in my living room, tough, cynical, crafty old Frenchman, and I wonder if he knows that the nightmare at the bottom of my mind, as I played the role of Chico, was all the possible fates of Paul. This is but another way of saying that I relived the disasters which had nearly undone me; but, because I was thinking of Paul, I discovered that I did not want my son ever to feel toward me as I had felt toward my own father. He had died when I was eleven, but I had watched the humiliations he had to bear, and I had pitied him. But was there not, in that pity, however painfully and unwillingly, also some contempt? For how could I *know* what he had borne? I knew only that I was his son. However he had loved me, whatever he had borne, I, his son, was despised. Even had he lived, he could have done nothing to prevent it, nothing to protect me. The best that he could hope to do was to prepare me for it; and even at that he had failed. How can one be prepared for the spittle in the face, all the tireless ingenuity which goes into the spite and fear of small, unutterably miserable people whose greatest terror is the singular identity, whose joy, whose safety, is entirely dependent on the humiliation and anguish of others?

But for Paul, I swore it, such a day would never come. I would throw my life and my work between Paul and the nightmare of the world. I would make it impossible for the world to treat Paul as it had treated my father and me.

Mahalia's record ends. Vidal rises to turn it over. "Well?" He looks at me very affectionately. "Your nightmares, please!"

"Oh, I was thinking of that summer I spent in Alabama, when

my mother died." I stop. "You know, but when we finally filmed that bar scene, I was thinking of New York. I was scared in Alabama, but I almost went crazy in New York. I was sure I'd never make it back here — back here to Harriet. And I knew if I didn't, it was going to be the end of me." Now Mahalia is singing "When the Saints Go Marching In." "I got a job in the town as an elevator boy, in the town's big department store. It was a special favor, one of my father's white friends got it for me. For a long time, in the South, we all — depended — on the — *kindness* — of white friends." I take out a handkerchief and wipe my face. "But this man didn't like me. I guess I didn't seem grateful enough, wasn't enough like my father, what he thought my father was. And I couldn't get used to the town again, I'd been away too long, I hated it. It's a terrible town, anyway, the whole thing looks as though it's been built around a jailhouse. There's a room in the courthouse, a room where they beat you up. Maybe you're walking along the street one night, it's usually at night, but it happens in the daytime, too. And the police car comes up behind you and the cop says, Hey, boy. Come on over here. So you go on over. He says, Boy, I believe you drunk. And, you see, if you say, No, no sir, he'll beat you because you're calling him a liar. And if you say anything else, unless it's something to make him laugh, he'll take you in and beat you, just for fun. The trick is to think of some way for them to have their fun without beating you up."

The street lights of Paris click on and turn all the green leaves silver. "Or to go along with the ways *they* dream up. And they'll do anything, anything at all, to prove that you're no better than a dog and to make you feel like one. And they hated me because I'd been North and I'd been to Europe. People kept saying, I hope you didn't bring no foreign notions back here with you, boy. And I'd say, No sir, or No ma'am, but I never said it right. And there was a time, all of them remembered it, when I *had* said it right. But now they could tell that I despised them — I guess, no matter what, I wanted them to know that I despised them. But I didn't despise them any more than everyone else did, only the others never let it show. They knew how to keep the white folks happy, and it was easy — you just had to keep them feeling like they were God's favor to the universe. They'd walk around with great big foolish grins on their faces and the colored folks loved to see this, because they

hated them so much. "Just look at So-and-So," somebody'd say. "His white is *on* him today." And when we didn't hate them, we pitied them. In America, that's usually what it means to have a white friend. You pity the poor bastard because he was born believing the world's a great place to be, and you know it's not, and you can see that he's going to have a terrible time getting used to this idea, if he *ever* gets used to it."

Then I think of Paul again, those eyes which still imagine that I can do anything, that skin, the color of honey and fire, his jet-black, curly hair. I look out at Paris again, and I listen to Mahalia. "Maybe it's better to have the terrible times first. I don't know. Maybe, then, you can have, *if* you live, a better life, a real life, because you had to fight so hard to get it away — you know? — from the mad dog who held it in his teeth. But then your life has all those tooth marks, too, all those tatters, and all that blood." I walk to the bottle and raise it. "One for the road?"

"Thank you," says Vidal.

I pour us a drink, and he watches me. I have never talked so much before, not about those things anyway. I know that Vidal has nightmares, because he knows so much about them, but he has never told me what his are. I think that he probably does not talk about his nightmares any more. I know that the war cost him his wife and his son, and that he was in prison in Germany. He very rarely refers to it. He has a married daughter who lives in England, and he rarely speaks of her. He is like a man who has learned to live on what is left of an enormous fortune.

We are silent for a moment.

"Please go on," he says, with a smile. "I am curious about the reality behind the reality of your performance."

"My sister, Louisa, never married," I say, abruptly, "because, once, years ago, she and the boy she was going with and two friends of theirs were out driving in a car and the police stopped them. The girl who was with them was very fair and the police pretended not to believe her when she said she was colored. They made her get out and stand in front of the headlights of the car and pull down her pants and raise her dress — they said that was the only way they could be sure. And you can imagine what they said, and what they did — and they were lucky, at that, that it didn't go any further. But none of the men could do anything about it. Louisa couldn't

face that boy again, and I guess he couldn't face her." Now it is really growing dark in the room and I cross to the light switch. "You know, I know what that boy felt, I've felt it. They want you to feel that you're not a man, maybe that's the only way they can feel like men, I don't know. I walked around New York with Harriet's cablegram in my pocket as though it were some atomic secret, in *code*, and they'd kill me if they ever found out what it meant. You know, there's something wrong with people like that. And thank God Harriet was here, she *proved* that the world was bigger than the world they wanted me to live in, I *had* to get back here, get to a place where people were too busy with their own lives, *their private lives*, to make fantasies about mine, to set up walls around mine." I look at him. The light in the room has made the night outside blue-black and golden and the great searchlight of the Eiffel Tower is turning in the sky. "That's what it's like in America, for me, anyway. I always feel that I don't exist there, except in someone else's — usually dirty — mind. I don't know if you know what that means, but I do, and I don't want to put Harriet through that and I don't want to raise Paul there."

"Well," he says at last, "you are not required to remain in America forever, are you? You will sing in that elegant club which apparently feels that it cannot, much longer, so much as open its doors without you, and you will probably accept the movie offer, you would be very foolish not to. You will make a lot of money. Then, one day, you will remember that airlines and steamship companies are still in business and that France still exists. *That* will certainly be cause for astonishment."

Vidal was a Gaullist before De Gaulle came to power. But he regrets the manner of De Gaulle's rise and he is worried about De Gaulle's regime. "It is not the fault of *mon général*," he sometimes says, sadly. "Perhaps it is history's fault. I *suppose* it must be history which always arranges to bill a civilization at the very instant it is least prepared to pay."

Now he rises and walks out on the balcony, as though to reassure himself of the reality of Paris. Mahalia is singing "Didn't It Rain?" I walk out and stand beside him.

"You are a good boy — Chico," he says. I laugh. "You believe in love. You do not know all the things love cannot do, but" — he smiles — "love will teach you that."

We go, after dinner, to a Left Bank *discothèque* which can charge outrageous prices because Marlon Brando wandered in there one night. By accident, according to Vidal. "Do you know how many people in Paris are becoming rich — to say nothing of those, *hélas!* who are going broke — on the off chance that Marlon Brando will lose his way again?"

He has not, presumably, lost his way tonight, but the *discothèque* is crowded with those strangely faceless people who are part of the night life of all great cities, and who always arrive, moments, hours, or decades late, on the spot made notorious by an event or a movement or a handful of personalities. So here are American boys, anything but beardless, scratching around for Hemingway; American girls titillating themselves with Frenchmen and existentialism while waiting for the American boys to shave off their beards; French painters busily pursuing the revolution which ended thirty years ago; and the young, bored, perverted American *arrivistes* who are buying their way into the art world via flattery and liquor, and the production of canvases as arid as their greedy little faces. Here are boys, of all nations, one step above the pimp, who are occasionally walked across a stage or trotted before a camera. And the girls, their enemies, whose faces are sometimes seen in ads, one of whom will surely have a tantrum before the evening is out.

In a corner, as usual, surrounded, as usual, by smiling young men, sits the drunken blond woman who was once the mistress of a famous, dead painter. She is a figure of some importance in the art world, and so rarely has to pay for either her drinks or her lovers. An older Frenchman, who was once a famous director, is playing *quatre cent vingt-et-un* with the woman behind the cash register. He nods pleasantly to Vidal and me as we enter, but makes no move to join us, and I respect him for this. Vidal and I are obviously cast tonight in the role vacated by Brando: our entrance justifies the prices and sends a kind of shiver through the room. It is marvelous to watch the face of the waiter as he approaches, all smiles and deference and grace, not so much honored by our presence as achieving his reality from it; excellence, he seems to be saying, gravitates naturally toward excellence. We order two whisky and sodas. I know why Vidal sometimes comes here. He is lonely. I do not think that he expects ever to love one woman again, and so he distracts himself with many.

Since this is a *discothèque*, jazz is blaring from the walls and record sleeves are scattered about with a devastating carelessness. Two of them are mine and no doubt, presently, someone will play the recording of the songs I sang in the film.

"I thought," says Vidal, with a malicious little smile, "that your farewell to Paris would not be complete without a brief exposure to the perils of fame. Perhaps it will help prepare you for America, where, I am told, the populace is yet more carnivorous than it is here."

I can see that one of the vacant models is preparing herself to come to our table and ask for an autograph, hoping, since she is pretty — she has, that is, the usual female equipment, dramatized in the usual, modern way — to be invited for a drink. Should the maneuver succeed, one of her boy friends or girl friends will contrive to come by the table, asking for a light or a pencil or a lipstick, and it will be extremely difficult not to invite this person to join us, too. Before the evening ends, we will be surrounded. I don't, now, know what I expected of fame, but I suppose it never occurred to me that the light could be just as dangerous, just as killing, as the dark.

"Well, let's make it brief," I tell him. "Sometimes I wish that you weren't quite so fond of me."

He laughs. "There are some very interesting people here tonight. Look."

Across the room from us, and now staring at our table, are a group of American Negro students, who are probably visiting Paris for the first time. There are four of them, two boys and two girls, and I suppose that they must be in their late teens or early twenties. One of the boys, a gleaming, curly-haired, golden-brown type — the color of his mother's fried chicken — is carrying a guitar. When they realize we have noticed them, they smile and wave — wave as though I were one of their possessions, as, indeed, I am. Golden-brown is a mime. He raises his guitar, drops his shoulders, and his face falls into the lugubrious lines of Chico's face as he approaches death. He strums a little of the film's theme music, and I laugh and the table laughs. It is as though we were all back home and had met for a moment, on a Sunday morning, say, before a church or a poolroom or a barbershop.

And they have created a sensation in the *discothèque*, naturally,

having managed, with no effort whatever, to outwit all the gleaming boys and girls. Their table, which had been of no interest only a moment before, has now become the focus of a rather pathetic attention; their smiles have made it possible for the others to smile, and to nod in our direction.

"Oh," says Vidal, "he does that far better than you ever did, perhaps I will make him a star."

"Feel free, *m'sieu, le bon Dieu*, I got mine." But I can see that his attention has really been caught by one of the girls, slim, tense, and dark, who seems, though it is hard to know how one senses such things, to be treated by the others with a special respect. And, in fact, the table now seems to be having a council of war, to be demanding her opinion or her cooperation. She listens, frowning, laughing; the quality, the force of her intelligence causes her face to keep changing all the time, as though a light played on it. And, presently, with a gesture she might once have used to scatter feed to chickens, she scoops up from the floor one of those dangling rag-bags women love to carry. She holds it loosely by the drawstrings, so that it is banging somewhere around her ankle, and walks over to our table. She has an honest, forthright walk, entirely unlike the calculated, pelvic workout by means of which most women get about. She is small, but sturdily, economically, put together.

As she reaches our table, Vidal and I rise, and this throws her for a second. (It has been a long time since I have seen such an attractive girl.)

Also, everyone, of course, is watching us. It is really a quite curious moment. They have put on the record of Chico singing a sad, angry Martinique ballad; my own voice is coming at us from the walls as the girl looks from Vidal to me, and smiles.

"I guess you know," she says, "we weren't *about* to let you get out of here without bugging you just a little bit. We've only been in Paris just a couple of days and we thought for sure that we wouldn't have a chance of running into you anywhere, because it's in all the papers that you're coming home."

"Yes," I say, "yes. I'm leaving the day after tomorrow."

"Oh!" She grins. "Then we really *are* lucky." I find that I have almost forgotten the urchinlike grin of a colored girl. "I guess, before I keep babbling on, I'd better introduce myself. My name is Ada Holmes."

We shake hands. "This is Monsieur Vidal, the director of the film."

"I'm very honored to meet you, sir."

"Will you join us for a moment? Won't you sit down?" And Vidal pulls a chair out for her.

But she frowns contritely. "I really ought to get back to my friends." She looks at me. "I really just came over to say, for myself and all the kids, that we've got your records and we've seen your movie, and it means so much to us" —and she laughs, breathlessly, nervously, it is somehow more moving than tears — "more than I can say. Much more. And we wanted to know if you and your friend" — she looks at Vidal — "your *director*, Monsieur Vidal, would allow us to buy you a drink? We'd be very honored if you would."

"It is we who are honored," says Vidal, promptly, "*and* grateful. We were getting terribly bored with one another, thank God you came along."

The three of us laugh, and we cross the room.

The three at the table rise, and Ada makes the introductions. The other girl, taller and paler than Ada, is named Ruth. One of the boys is named Talley — "short for Talliafero" — and Golden-brown's name is Pete. "Man," he tells me, "I dig you the most. You tore me up, baby, tore me *up*."

"You tore up a lot of people," Talley says cryptically, and he and Ruth laugh. Vidal does not know, but I do, that Talley is probably referring to white people.

They are from New Orleans and Tallahassee and North Carolina; are college students, and met on the boat. They have been in Europe all summer, in Italy and Spain, but are only just getting to Paris.

"We meant to come sooner," says Ada, "but we could never make up our minds to leave a place. I thought we'd never pry Ruth loose from Venice."

"I resigned myself," says Pete, "and just sat in the Piazza San Marco, drinking gin fizz and being photographed with the pigeons, while Ruth had herself driven *all* up and down the Grand Canal." He looks at Ruth. "Finally, thank heaven, it rained."

"She was working off her hostilities," says Ada, with a grin. "We

thought we might as well let her do it in Venice, the opportunities in North Carolina are really terribly limited."

"There are some very upset people walking around down there," Ruth says, "and a couple of tours around the Grand Canal might do them a world of good."

Pete laughs. "Can't you just see Ruth escorting them to the edge of the water?"

"I haven't lifted my hand in anger yet," Ruth says, "but, oh, Lord," and she laughs, clenching and unclenching her fists.

"You haven't been back for a long time, have you?" Talley asks me.

"Eight years. I haven't really lived there for twelve years."

Pete whistles. "I fear you are in for some surprises, my friend. There have been some changes made." Then, "Are you afraid?"

"A little."

"We all are," says Ada, "that's why I was so glad to get away for a little while."

"Then you haven't been back since Black Monday," Talley says. He laughs. "That's how it's gone down in Confederate history." He turns to Vidal. "What do people think about it here?"

Vidal smiles, delighted. "It seems extraordinarily infantile behavior, even for Americans, from whom, I must say, I have never expected very much in the way of maturity." Everyone at the table laughs. Vidal goes on. "But I cannot really talk about it, I do not understand it. I have never really understood Americans; I am an old man now, and I suppose I never will. There is something very nice about them, something very winning, but they seem so ignorant — so ignorant of life. Perhaps it is strange, but the only people from your country with whom I have ever made contact are black people — like my good friend, my discovery, here," and he slaps me on the shoulder. "Perhaps it is because we, in Europe, whatever else we do not know, or have forgotten, know about suffering. We have suffered here. You have suffered, too. But most Americans do not yet know what anguish is. It is too bad, because the life of the West is in their hands." He turns to Ada. "I cannot help saying that I think it is a scandal — and we may all pay very dearly for it — that a civilized nation should elect to represent it a man who is so simple that he thinks the world is simple." And

silence falls at the table and the four young faces stare at him.

"Well," says Pete, at last, turning to me, "you won't be bored, man, when you get back there."

"It's much too nice a night," I say, "to stay cooped up in this place, where all I can hear is my own records." We laugh. "Why don't we get out of here and find a sidewalk café?" I tap Pete's guitar. "Maybe we can find out if you've got any talent."

"Oh, talent I've got," says Pete, "but character, man, I'm lacking."

So, after some confusion about the bill, for which Vidal has already made himself responsible, we walk out into the Paris night. It is very strange to feel that, very soon now, these boulevards will not exist for me. People will be walking up and down, as they are tonight, and lovers will be murmuring in the black shadows of the plane trees, and there will be these same still figures on the benches or in the parks — but they will not exist for me, I will not be here. For a long while Paris will no longer exist for me, except in my mind; and only in the minds of some people will I exist any longer for Paris. After departure, only invisible things are left, perhaps the life of the world is held together by invisible chains of memory and loss and love. So many things, so many people, depart! and we can only repossess them in our minds. Perhaps this is what the old folks meant, what my mother and my father meant, when they counseled us to keep the faith.

We have taken a table at the Deux Magots and Pete strums on his guitar and begins to play this song:

Preach the word, preach the word, preach the word!

If I never, never see you any more.

Preach the word, preach the word.

And I'll meet you on Canaan's shore.

He has a strong, clear, boyish voice, like a young preacher's, and he is smiling as he sings his song. Ada and I look at each other and grin, and Vidal is smiling. The waiter looks a little worried, for we are already beginning to attract a crowd, but it is a summer night, the gendarmes on the corner do not seem to mind, and there will be time, anyway, to stop us.

Pete was not there, none of us were, the first time this song was

needed; and no one now alive can imagine what that time was like. But the song has come down the bloodstained ages. I suppose this to mean that the song is still needed, still has its work to do.

The others are all, visibly, very proud of Pete; and we all join him, and people stop to listen:

Testify! Testify!
If I never, never see you any more!
Testify! Testify!
I'll meet you on Canaan's shore!

In the crowd that has gathered to listen to us, I see a face I know, the face of a North African prizefighter, who is no longer in the ring. I used to know him well in the old days, but have not seen him for a long time. He looks quite well, his face is shining, he is quite decently dressed. And something about the way he holds himself, not quite looking at our table, tells me that he has seen me, but does not want to risk a rebuff. So I call him. "Boona!"

And he turns, smiling, and comes loping over to our table, his hands in his pockets. Pete is still singing and Ada and Vidal have taken off on a conversation of their own. Ruth and Talley look curiously, expectantly, at Boona. Now that I have called him over, I feel somewhat uneasy. I realize that I do not know what he is doing now, or how he will get along with any of these people, and I can see in his eyes that he is delighted to be in the presence of two young girls. There are virtually no North African women in Paris, and not even the dirty, rat-faced girls who live, apparently, in cafés are willing to go with an Arab. So Boona is always looking for a girl, and because he is so deprived and because he is not Western, his techniques can be very unsettling. I know he is relieved that the girls are not French and not white. He looks briefly at Vidal and Ada. Vidal, also, though for different reasons, is always looking for a girl.

But Boona has always been very nice to me. Perhaps I am sorry that I called him over, but I did not want to snub him.

He claps one hand to the side of my head, as is his habit. "*Comment vas-tu, mon frère?* I have not see you, oh, for long time." And he asks me, as in the old days, "You all right? Nobody bother you?" And he laughs. "*Ah! Tu as fait le chemin, toi!* Now you are *vedette*, big star — wonderful!" He looks around the table, made

a little uncomfortable by the silence that has fallen, now that Pete has stopped singing. "I have seen you in the movies — you know? — and I tell everybody, I know *him!*" He points to me, and laughs, and Ruth and Talley laugh with him. "That's right, man, you make me real proud, you make me cry!"

"Boona, I want you to meet some friends of mine." And I go round the table: "Ruth, Talley, Ada, Pete" — and he bows and shakes hands, his dark eyes gleaming with pleasure — "*et Monsieur Vidal, le metteur en scène du film qui t'a arraché des larmes.*"

"*Enchanté.*" But his attitude toward Vidal is colder, more distrustful. "Of course I have heard of Monsieur Vidal. He is the director of many films, many of them made me cry." This last statement is utterly, even insolently, insincere.

But Vidal, I think, is relieved that I will now be forced to speak to Boona and will leave him alone with Ada.

"Sit down," I say, "have a drink with us, let me have your news. What's been happening with you, what are you doing with yourself these days?"

"Ah," he sits down, "nothing very brilliant, my brother." He looks at me quickly, with a little smile. "You know, we have been having hard times here."

"Where are you from?" Ada asks him.

His brilliant eyes take her in entirely, but she does not flinch. "I am from Tunis." He says it proudly, with a little smile.

"From Tunis. I have never been to Africa, I would love to go one day."

He laughs. "Africa is a big place. Very big. There are many countries in Africa, many" — he looks briefly at Vidal — "different kinds of people, many colonies."

"But Tunis," she continues, in her innocence, "is free? Freedom is happening all over Africa. That's why I would like to go there."

"I have not been back for a long time," says Boona, "but all the news I get from Tunis, from my people, is not good."

"Wouldn't you like to go back?" Ruth asks.

Again he looks at Vidal. "That is not so easy."

Vidal smiles. "You know what I would like to do? There's a wonderful Spanish place not far from here, where we can listen to live music and dance a little." He turns to Ada. "Would you like that?"

He is leaving it up to me to get rid of Boona, and it is, of course,

precisely for this reason that I cannot do it. Besides, it is no longer so simple.

"Oh, I'd love that," says Ada, and she turns to Boona. "Won't you come, too?"

"Thank you, mam'selle," he says, softly, and his tongue flicks briefly over his lower lip, and he smiles. He is very moved, people are not often nice to him.

In the Spanish place there are indeed a couple of Spanish guitars, drums, castanets, and a piano, but the uses to which these are being put carry one back, as Pete puts it, to the levee. "These are the wailingest Spanish cats I ever heard," says Ruth. "They didn't learn how to do this in Spain, no, they didn't, they been rambling. You ever hear anything like this going on in Spain?" Talley takes her out on the dance floor, which is already crowded. A very handsome Frenchwoman is dancing with an enormous, handsome black man, who seems to be her lover, who seems to have taught her how to dance. Apparently, they are known to the musicians, who egg them on with small cries of "*Olé!*" It is a very good-natured crowd, mostly foreigners, Spaniards, Swedes, Greeks. Boona takes Ada out on the dance floor while Vidal is answering some questions put to him by Pete on the entertainment situation in France. Vidal looks a little put out, and I am amused.

We are there for perhaps an hour, dancing, talking, and I am, at last, a little drunk. In spite of Boona, who is a very good and tireless dancer, Vidal continues his pursuit of Ada, and I begin to wonder if he will make it and I begin to wonder if I want him to.

I am still puzzling out my reaction when Pete, who has disappeared, comes in through the front door, catches my eye, and signals to me. I leave the table and follow him into the streets.

He looks very upset. "I don't want to bug you, man," he says, "but I fear your boy has goofed."

I know he is not joking. I think he is probably angry at Vidal because of Ada, and I wonder what I can do about it and why he should be telling me.

I stare at him, gravely, and he says, "It looks like he stole some money."

"Stole *money*? Who, Vidal?"

And then, of course, I get it, in the split second before he says, impatiently, "No, are you kidding? Your friend, the Tunisian."

I do not know what to say or what to do, and so I temporize with questions. All the time I am wondering if this can be true and what I can do about it if it is. The trouble is, I know that Boona steals, he would probably not be alive if he didn't, but I cannot say so to these children, who probably still imagine that everyone who steals is a thief. But he has never, to my knowledge, stolen from a friend. It seems unlike him. I have always thought of him as being better than that, and smarter than that. And so I cannot believe it, but neither can I doubt it. I do not know anything about Boona's life, these days. This causes me to realize that I do not really know much about Boona.

"Who did he steal it from?"

"From Ada. Out of her bag."

"How much?"

"Ten dollars. It's not an awful lot of money, but" — he grimaces — "none of us *have* an awful lot of money."

"I know." The dark side street on which we stand is nearly empty. The only sound on the street is the muffled music of the Spanish club. "How do you know it was Boona?"

He anticipates my own unspoken rejoinder. "Who else could it be? Besides — somebody *saw* him do it."

"Somebody saw him?"

"Yes."

I do not ask him who this person is, for fear that he will say it is Vidal.

"Well," I say, "I'll try to get it back." I think that I will take Boona aside and then replace the money myself. "Was it in dollars or in francs?"

"In francs."

I have no dollars and this makes it easier. I do not know how I can possibly face Boona and accuse him of stealing money from my friends. I would rather give him the benefit of even the faintest doubt. But, "Who saw him?" I ask.

"Talley. But we didn't want to make a thing about it —"

"Does Ada know it's gone?"

"Yes." He looks at me helplessly. "I know this makes you feel pretty bad, but we thought we'd better tell you, rather than" — lamely — "anybody else."

Now, Ada comes out of the club, carrying her ridiculous hand-

bag, and with her face all knotted and sad. "Oh," she says, "I hate to cause all this trouble, it's not worth it, not for ten lousy dollars." I am astonished to see that she has been weeping, and tears come to her eyes now.

I put my arm around her shoulder. "Come on, now. You're not causing anybody any trouble and, anyway, it's nothing to cry about."

"It isn't your fault, Ada," Pete says, miserably.

"Oh, I ought to get a sensible handbag," she says, "like you're always telling me to do," and she laughs a little, then looks at me. "Please don't try to do anything about it. Let's just forget it."

"What's happening inside?" I ask her.

"Nothing. They're just talking. I think Mr. Vidal is dancing with Ruth. He's a great dancer, that little Frenchman."

"He's a great talker, too," Pete says.

"Oh, he doesn't mean anything," says Ada, "he's just having fun. He probably doesn't get a chance to talk to many American girls."

"He certainly made up for lost time tonight."

"Look," I say, "if Talley and Boona are alone, maybe you better go back in. We'll be in in a minute. Let's try to keep this as quiet as we can."

"Yeah," he says, "okay. We're going soon anyway, okay?"

"Yes," she tells him, "right away."

But as he turns away, Boona and Talley step out into the street, and it is clear that Talley feels that he has Boona under arrest. I almost laugh, the whole thing is beginning to resemble one of those mad French farces with people flying in and out of doors; but Boona comes straight to me.

"They say I stole money, my friend. You know me, you are the only one here who knows me, you know I would not do such a thing."

I look at him and I do not know what to say. Ada looks at him with her eyes full of tears and looks away. I take Boona's arm.

"We'll be back in a minute," I say. We walk a few paces up the dark, silent street.

"She say I take her money," he says. He, too, looks as though he is about to weep — but I do not know for which reason. "You know me, you know me almost twelve years, you think I do such a thing?"

Talley saw you, I want to say, but I cannot say it. Perhaps Talley

only thought he saw him. Perhaps it is easy to see a boy who looks like Boona with his hand in an American girl's purse.

"If you not believe me," he says, "search me. Search me!" And he opens his arms wide, theatrically, and now there are tears standing in his eyes.

I do not know what his tears mean, but I certainly cannot search him. I want to say, I know you steal, I know you have to steal. Perhaps you took the money out of this girl's purse in order to eat tomorrow, in order not to be thrown into the streets tonight, in order to stay out of jail. This girl means nothing to you, after all, she is only an American, an American like me. Perhaps, I suddenly think, no girl means anything to you, or ever will again, they have beaten you too hard and kept you in the gutter too long. And I also think, If you would steal from her, then of course you would lie to me, neither of us means anything to you; perhaps, in your eyes, we are simply luckier gangsters in a world which is run by gangsters. But I cannot say any of these things to Boona. I cannot say, Tell me the truth, nobody cares about the money any more.

So I say, "Of course I will not search you." And I realize that he knew that I would not.

"I think it is that Frenchman who say I am a thief. They think we all are thieves." His eyes are bright and bitter. He looks over my shoulder. "They have all come out of the club now."

I look around and they are all there, in a little dark knot on the sidewalk.

"Don't worry," I say. "It doesn't matter."

"You believe me? My brother?" And his eyes look into mine with a terrible intensity.

"Yes," I force myself to say, "yes, of course, I believe you. Someone made a mistake, that's all."

"You know, the way American girls run around, they have their sack open all the time, she could lose the money anywhere. Why she blame me? Because I come from Africa?" Tears are glittering on his face. "Here she come now."

And Ada comes up the street with her straight, determined walk. She walks straight to Boona and takes his hand. "I am sorry," she says, "for everything that happened. Please believe me. It isn't worth all this fuss. I'm sure you're a very nice person, and" — she falters — "I must have lost the money, I'm sure I lost it." She looks

at him. "It isn't worth hurting your feelings, and I'm terribly sorry about it."

"I no take your money," he says. "Really, truly, I no take it. Ask him" — pointing to me, grabbing me by the arm, shaking me — "he know me for years, he will tell you that I never, never steal!"

"I'm sure," she says. "I'm sure."

I take Boona by the arm again. "Lets forget it. Let's forget it all. We're all going home now, and one of these days we'll have a drink again and we'll forget all about it, all right?"

"Yes," says Ada, "let us forget it." And she holds out her hand.

Boona takes it, wonderingly. His eyes take her in again. "You are a very nice girl. Really. A very nice girl."

"I'm sure you're a nice person, too." She pauses. "Good night."

"Good night," he says, after a long silence.

Then he kisses me on both cheeks. "*Au revoir, mon frère.*"

"*Au revoir, Boona.*"

After a moment we turn and walk away, leaving him standing there.

"Did he take it?" asks Vidal.

"I tell you, I *saw* him," says Talley.

"Well," I say, "it doesn't matter now." I look back and see Boona's stocky figure disappearing down the street.

"No," says Ada, "it doesn't matter." She looks up. "It's almost morning."

"I would gladly," says Vidal, stammering, "gladly —"

But she is herself again. "I wouldn't think of it. We had a wonderful time tonight, a wonderful time, and I wouldn't think of it." She turns to me with that urchinlike grin. "It was wonderful meeting you. I hope you won't have too much trouble getting used to the States again."

"Oh, I don't think I will," I say. And then, "I hope you won't."

"No," she says, "I don't think anything they can do will surprise me any more."

"Which way are we all going?" asks Vidal. "I hope someone will share my taxi with me."

But he lives in the sixteenth arrondissement, which is not in anyone's direction. We walk him to the line of cabs standing under the clock at Odéon.

And we look each other in the face, in the growing morning light.

His face looks weary and lined and lonely. He puts both hands on my shoulders and then puts one hand on the nape of my neck. "Do not forget me, Chico," he says. "You must come back and see us, one of these days. Many of us depend on you for many things."

"I'll be back," I say. "I'll never forget you."

He raises his eyebrows and smiles. "*Alors, adieu.*"

"*Adieu, Vidal.*"

"I was happy to meet all of you," he says. He looks at Ada. "Perhaps we will meet again before you leave."

"Perhaps," she says. "Good-by, Monsieur Vidal."

"Good-by."

Vidal's cab drives away. "I also leave you now," I say. "I must go home and wake up my son and prepare for our journey."

I leave them standing on the corner, under the clock, which points to six. They look very strange and lost and determined, the four of them. Just before my cab turns off the boulevard, I wave to them and they wave back.

Mme. Dumont is in the hall, mopping the floor.

"Did all my family get home?" I ask. I feel very cheerful, I do not know why.

"Yes," she says, "they are all here. Paul is still sleeping."

"May I go in and get him?"

She looks at me in surprise. "Of course."

So I walk into her apartment and walk into the room where Paul lies sleeping. I stand over his bed for a long time.

Perhaps my thoughts travel — travel through to him. He opens his eyes and smiles up at me. He puts a fist to his eyes and raises his arms. "*Bonjour, Papa.*"

I lift him up. "*Bonjour.* How do you feel today?"

"Oh, I don't know yet," he says.

I laugh. I put him on my shoulder and walk out into the hall. Mme. Dumont looks up at him with her radiant, aging face.

"Ah," she says, "you are going on a journey! How does it feel?"

"He doesn't know yet," I tell her. I walk to the elevator door and open it, dropping Paul down to the crook of my arm.

She laughs again. "He will know later. What a journey! *Jusqu' au nouveau monde!*"

I open the cage and we step inside. "Yes," I say, "all the way to the new world." I press the button and the cage, holding my son and me, goes up.

THE LISTENER

BY JOHN BERRY

ONCE THERE was a puny little Czech concert violinist named Rudolf, who lived in Sweden. Some of his friends thought he was not the best of musicians because he was restless; others thought he was restless because he was not the best of musicians. At any rate, he hit upon a way of making a living, with no competitors. Whether by choice or necessity, he used to sail about Scandinavia in his small boat, all alone, giving concerts in little seaport towns. If he found accompanists, well and good; if not, he played works for unaccompanied violin; and it happened once or twice that he wanted a piano so badly that he imagined one, and then he played whole sonatas for violin and piano, with no piano in sight.

One year Rudolf sailed all the way out to Iceland and began working his way around that rocky coast from one town to another. It was a hard, stubborn land; but people in those difficult places do not forget the law of hospitality to the stranger—for their God may decree that they too shall become strangers on the face of the earth. The audiences were small, and even if Rudolf had been really first-rate, they would not have been very demonstrative. From ancient times their energy had gone, first of all, into earnest toil. Sometimes they were collected by the local schoolteacher, who reminded them of their duty to the names of Beethoven and Bach and Mozart and one or two others whose music perhaps was not much heard in those parts. Too often people sat stolidly watching

Karl Almegaard told me this story. If it were not true, he would not have told it to me.

the noisy little fiddler, and went home feeling gravely edified. But they paid.

As Rudolf was sailing from one town to the next along a sparsely settled shore, the northeast turned black and menacing. A storm was bearing down upon Iceland. Rudolph was rounding a bleak, dangerous cape, and his map told him that the nearest harbor was half a day's journey away. He was starting to worry when he saw, less than a mile offshore, a lighthouse on a tiny rock island. At the base of the lighthouse was a deep, narrow cove, protected by cliffs. With some difficulty, in the rising seas, he put in there and moored to an iron ring that hung from the cliff. A flight of stairs, hewn out of the rock, led up to the lighthouse. On top of the cliff, outlined against the scudding clouds, stood a man.

"You are welcome!" the voice boomed over the sound of the waves that were already beginning to break over the island.

Darkness fell quickly. The lighthouse keeper led his guest up the spiral stairs to the living room on the third floor, then busied himself in preparation for the storm. Above all, he had to attend to the great lamp in the tower, that dominated the whole region. It was a continuous light, intensified by reflectors, and eclipsed by shutters at regular intervals. The duration of light was equal to that of darkness.

The lighthouse keeper was a huge old man with a grizzled beard that came down over his chest. Slow, deliberate, bearlike, he moved without wasted motion about the limited world of which he was the master. He spoke little, as if words had not much importance compared to the other forces that comprised his life. Yet he was equable, as those elements were not.

After the supper of black bread and boiled potatoes, herring, cheese and hot tea, which they took in the kitchen above the living room, the two men sat and contemplated each other's presence. Above them was the maintenance room, and above that the great lamp spoke majestic, silent messages of light to the ships at sea. The storm hammered like a battering ram on the walls of the lighthouse. Rudolf offered tobacco, feeling suddenly immature as he did so. The old man smiled a little as he declined it by a slight movement of the head; it was as if he knew well the uses of tobacco and the need for offering it, and affirmed it all, yet — here he, too, was half-way apologetic — was self-contained and without need of anything

that was not already within his power or to which he did not relinquish his power. And he sat there, gentle and reflective, his great workman hands resting on outspread thighs.

It seemed to Rudolf that the lighthouse keeper was entirely aware of all the sounds of the storm and of its violent impact upon the lighthouse, but he knew them so well that he did not have to think about them; they were like the involuntary movements of his own heart and blood. In the same way, beneath the simple courtesy that made him speak and listen to his guest in specific ways, he was already *calmly* and mysteriously a part of him, as surely as the mainland was connected with the little island, and all the islands with one another, so commodiously, under the ocean.

Gradually Rudolf drew forth the sparse data of the old man's life: He had been born in this very lighthouse eighty-three years before, when his father was the lighthouse keeper. His mother — the only woman he had ever known — had taught him to read the Bible, and he read it daily. He had no other books.

As a musician, Rudolf had not had time to read much either — but then, he had lived in cities. He reached down and took his beloved violin out of its case.

"What do you make with that, sir?" the old man asked.

For a second Rudolf thought his host might be joking; but the serenity of the other's expression reassured him. There was not even curiosity about the instrument, but rather a whole interest in him, the person, that included his "work." In most circumstances Rudolf would have found it hard to believe that there could exist someone who did not know what a violin was; yet now he had no inclination to laugh. He felt small and inadequate.

"I make — music with it," he stammered in a low voice.

"Music," the old man said ponderously. "I have heard of it. But I have never seen music."

"One does not see music. One hears it."

"Ah, yes," the lighthouse keeper consented, as it were with humility. This too was in the Nature of Things where in all works were wonders, and all things were known eternally and were poignant in their transiency. His wide gray eyes rested upon the little fiddler and conferred upon him all the importance of which any individual is capable.

Then something in the storm and the lighthouse and the old

man exalted Rudolf, filled him with compassion and love and a spaciousness infinitely beyond himself. He wanted to strike a work of fire and stars into being for the old man. And, with the storm as his accompanist, he stood and began to play — the Kreutzer Sonata of Beethoven.

The moments passed, moments that were days in the creation of that world of fire and stars: abysses and heights of passionate struggle, the Idea of Order, and the resolution of these in the greatness of the human spirit. Never before had Rudolf played with such mastery — or with such an accompanist. Waves and wind beat the tower with giant hands. Steadily above them the beacon blazed in its sure cycles of darkness and light. The last note ceased and Rudolf dropped his head on his chest, breathing hard. The ocean seethed over the island with a roar as of many voices.

The old man had sat unmoving through the work, his broad, gnarled hands resting on his thighs, his head bowed, listening massively. For some time he continued to sit in silence. Then he looked up, lifted those hands calmly, judiciously, and nodded his head.

"Yes," he said. "That is true."

BERCEUSE

BY ALFRED CHESTER

O LOVE LARRY I never so much as kissed a boy except my cousin Bob twice under a misiltoe at fifteen years of age. If there was ever another I hope God tears Goliath from my bosom like He took you away. But He won't for I was pure as snow tho its hard to believe in consideration of my behavior the very first night we met and not an hour after you walked in on that party. How is it possible that your good self opened the door of Lilah Krinsky's house and let in every devil of hell to grab hold of me. But thats how it was the minute I laid eyes on you with those big bullsholders and thick arms, and those long black lashes that I could see at ten yards away.

He's a railroad engineer, Lilah whispered when she saw my face but you were more to me like a steam engine. Come on she says, I'll introduce you but watch yourself Dolly. He's fast really fast and I dont mean maybe.

Larry I could hardly stand on my legs in front of you but just the same I said yes when you asked me would I care to dance. So we did tho it didn't seem like dancing more like passing away in a dead faint every other second while those black lashes went brushing into the soul of me.

Presently you says Would you care for a highball?

And before I can say No thanks, I never touch the stuff, you says You look like a girl who can hold a shot or two. Personally I cant stand women who won't take a drink with a man.

No your not a bit to blame Larry and did I ever say you are? Even

if I was cold sober I'd of gone just as fast out to Lilah's backyard with you that night. How could you guess I was a Virgin as I didn't once say no or try to stop you a bit from dancing me out to the gar-posed to hear with a regular Niagra of blood falling down in my body was a pair of lips that drank all the stars from the sky.

O when I think of the lilies the pansies the daisies the dandelions that tore and crushed under our pleasures that year! For after that first night I was wild and let you through the whole of spring and into summer so nowadays I can hardly go across a field a grassy space in town without feeling it shake under me like it remembers. Maybe if I'd listened back then I'd of heard all those broken flowers and the soiled earth shouting up about my sins. But how was I supposed to hear with a regular Niagra of blood falling down in my ears? O did I love you Larry so madly and said and said and said and said and you said Sure you love me to but men didn't make such a fuss about it as women did. To talk of men and women, we nineteen.

Love was I happy til near the end of July when I felt a coolness growing on you, just not the same craziness in your carress and gone even those few very manly love words. It made me sad alright maybe you noticed tho I did what I could to hold in my grief while you were more and more solemn or badtempered or restless and sometimes so unusually brutal. Tho not over the flowers. There you never were abandoned anymore until the very end. *But then!!!* O it began to be so awful at the very end the way you drove at me like an enemy so I'd feel like I was waking up in the middle of the night with someone sticking a dagger in my heart. Til finally one August night when we lay in Nahano Park on the bank beside the gully you stopped amidst and sat back and cried wailed sobbed and I joined in with you I dont know why the way one infant bawls on account of another or one dog howls on account of another, all smeared out upon a selfsame agony so I didnt know where I ended or began. Then you jumped up suddenly and buttoned up and without a further word left me alone wailing in the grass there.

You did not call on me for two weeks, sixteen days to be exact.

I didn't think you were sick tho once just in case I phoned up your house maybe your mother told you. When she answered I says Is Larry there?

No she says, He's at work. Whose this?

But I hung up as I didn't want her to think I was chasing after you. So that was how I knew you weren't sick and I thought you were merely tired of me. It was all over I thought. And I will not tell you how I suffered those long and many days. But then on the seventeenth evening I walked out and there you were in front of the drugstore where I worked waiting to walk home with me.

How pale you looked and retched sick, saying not a word, only lifting your cap and taking my arm to lead me in the direction of home. It was so long before you spoke a word with me uncapable of saying boo or good to see you again.

Halfways over you tell me Dolly what we have done is wrong.

The fires of rebuke suddenly like that out of your mouth! Did you remind me of it? Didn't I even know, having been as pure as Mary til some weeks before and having let my flower fly without a care or thought? Well my heart repented alright you can be sure even if til then it didnt occur to me nothing did only this busting. Only felt my abdomin and pelvic parts swollen swollen til they was stuffed with all the blooms we laid on and could destroy me. How where was there room for remembering everything was wrong? til you said so. As you will recall I nodded too sick to speak. Then we had no other talk til we sat down on the damp bench near my house on the esplanade.

You looked faraway in the distance and says Dolly I love you. That is why what we have done is wrong.

My repenting heart sprang to be sure larry, it was so different from anyway you ever said it before, like a sermon. And at the same time, at that very exact moment I knew I was bearing a fruit of our love.

You continued But marriage is naturally out of the question. We ought not even to see each other in consideration of our wrong, you says. We will have to do this grajually. It was too much to fight against these passed two weeks.

I could cry now thinking how my heart broke then. But it all turned out alright at least that part did'nt it? So why am I sitting here bawling now like I was at the pictures? Look!!! A tear stain on this paper.

I says Yes Larry I understand so well how what you say is right. Then up we get from the bench and arm in arm walk toward

the stoop of my house, tho I am swinging gayly my heavy broken heart is eaten up. Then all at once you just got so angry out of nowhere and scared me I can tell you my god gracious. You yell Why O why O why did you go out with me to the garden, Lilah's garden, that first night?

To which I replied Didn't you want me to? I thought you did. O Larry because I loved you already then and there from the instant you walked in a regular man tho young and bully as a boy and I wouldn't of cared if you danced me over to a bed of nails let alone lilies, I fairly yelled.

You says meanly with your sweet mouth that was to sensitive to be mean you says Did you love a lot of others?

I knew perfectly well what you meant to say tho you knew I was pure before and then again after until the day we wed, you yourself remarked upon the blood. I says NO NO never another.

You says Sure but you would of gone on nails or spikes or hot coals if you just so happened to.

I replied and do and will always will NO! NO! there couldnt of been another other than you.

And after that we were cast out of our gardens of paradise and instead went on dates to movies or dances or parties like two every other young couple. And when you saw me home you kissed me with your lips closed except on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons with your tongue tasting of lemon drops and your hands so nervous on my twin hearts but only on the outside of my dress so I gave up wearing a brassiere the weekends which was'nt noticable except when you squeezed as my cupcakes were swelling. For by the end of September I had to admit to myself that the fruit of our love was ripening apace and I knew soon I would have to make plans on account of living with my folks. But I didn't plan right away. I only ate very little and prayed.

O the unusual frost that came that year early and hard killing all the harvests but not mine, then went quick as it came with summer following again. So then when I thought it would be the end of us soon after I thought anyways we had a squeezed year together and all the seasons. That day as you will well remember when summer came back, on the night of, we went to Nahano instead of the pictures the air being a treat and in Nahano the grass was grey.

I says as we sat near the bridge over the gully where the ancient

Indian river is now a dry little black thing I says The summer is a big giant that got old and they thought he was dead so they buried him and now here is his grey head pushing out of the ground because he was'nt dead at all.

That is very lovely Dolly, you says and kissed me with your tongue althou it was a Wednesday. Then I almost died of fright when you put youre hand on my abdomin for I thought you'd feel The Child!!! But you said When we're married Dolly you will say lovely things all the time."

To imagine such a thing — I didnt expect it for a minute. Or maybe a little I did but not much. And I hoped then youd feel The Child but you didn't so I thought I would tell you then but decided Later on, not just then. How did it happen we went so wild all at once as in the beginning and I cried out My heavens I feel your birdie fluttering against my thigh.

You tell me with a load of pretty suffering in your lovely face you says He wants to be free.

And we freed him for a moment only but not to fly away but to set quietly in my palm its heart beating to beat the band. You will recall no doubt that this innocent thing brought all the evil into me again and I hollered aloud Put him put the birdie in his nest!

Instead you jerked away from me saying No we must not. We must wait until we are married.

But O there I had forgotten again all right and wrong and fought of you pleading It doesnt matter.

You shouted Yes Yes it does matter like anything for I want a Virgin in my wedding bed.

Not understanding I was without so much as a word and you said I will not have an impure woman for my wife not even if it was myself what violated her.

How I felt all chilled and frightened what did you mean I wondered.

I said But Larry.

You said to me whispering but angry so deturmined I could tell you says No buts. We must do things the right way. Hard as it is we must wait and you must remain a Virgin. We cannot sin before we are wed and believe me I'm thinking more of you than of myself. We must be married clean before the eyes of God.

What is there in the minds of men? A woman I can sometimes

understand but not a man never a man not you Larry from first to last. There surely is a darkness in mens' minds connected out to things that aren't everyday, coming back into the world to say all the most very strange things. Sometimes frinstance on the radio the news anouncers voice comes out, the six pm ones, such a nice young man's voice like he just finished eating a peach in January. How happy I sit and listen at first about this and that war and flood coming so peachy off his tongue. Then all at once I can hear something in the back of his voice some news he isnt going to talk about.

I hear it.

If he says it I know I'll die for sure. My heart comes bouncing up in my throat while I listen tight up to him.

Then I hear him say This morning the pryminister of Suchasuch" and my ears stop up. O I'm going to croak. He might say something plain frinstance and I think he is going to say my name, he is going to say, say, DOLORES to millions of listeners, no more than only Dolores and it wont be just my name but will be all connected up with that dark part of his mind that is connected out and out and out among the smashing shooting stars!! Like it would be suddenly the voice of Our Lord hollering my name to everyone threwout the world. And floods and wars and all of it will be for real for very real come pouring great catastropheas THE WORLD WILL CROAK and I will croak out there upon the stars the peachy voice til I turn off the radio and try to quieten my ears my heart.

So after you proposed Larry the seasons became right again and my fruit ripened through that cold dry autum, hung up shut in my mind as it was in my uterus. I didn't tell you anything but only feared you might hear the creature grow. Feel it you wouldnt. See it you couldn't for I not only starved myself but wrapped my belly in scarves and later choked up my middle with laced up corsets. And I knew the child would be born dead. So through the fall we loved deeply and purely and I knew that when you had the devil you went driving it out in another. How? I knew. A woman knows. For you didn't want to soil me with so few months to wait and the wedding to be in May.

I had the infant in February, sooner than I expected. That morn- ing at the drugstore the pains began and I told the boss I was gravely sick would he excuse me for the day? Thou I didn't have a plan in my head my prayers were answered truly and without a premedi-

tated thought I bought a secondhand valise and a pile of old newspapers. Then I walked across town and rented a room with a bath at the Riviera Palace which now is down but was then the most elegant.

The child was a long time coming.

I sat in the tub until after nightfall all naked with a towel between my teeth to break the pain on for it hurt. At last he came My God and was attached! I never knew before they were attached. My horror Larry like a Siammeese twin I thought and to go my life with him connected to me. Lord God it was the fittest punishment He could hope to inflinge upon my flaming soul. So first I tugged O I turn and shudder now remembering then I raised myself a little and took the drinking glass from the sink. I smashed it on the outside of the tub quickly like a jiffy cut him away from me. I must of fainted right away then as next I saw all over vomit and mud and blood and the child was making funny machiney noises. He was alive.

He was miserable being not altogether passed over so I ended his poor suffering by putting the towel on his face. Then he was still. He was a he I saw. I picked him up and put him to my breast. How wellmade he was I mean so perfect with all the little veins and the tiny fingers and that little cutie birdie. My God to make something so perfect like that and it being a waste. Imagine an automobile or a washing machine being all shaped up with all the little tiny cutie details so perfect and then all to waste. It couldnt be. And I thought What is he?

Here in this bathroom with me and my big milky tit in the face and the tub and the walls and the towel and all, for a minute before he died it was all alive in him, warm in him like it was in me. I was warm in him. Larry I felt my stomach unhinge. Me and that whole bathroom we werent alive anymore we were the cold outside. O didnt that thought hurt me. It had all been inside him and now was not. Is it that all to be dead Larry? That the outside isnt alive anymore?

When I laid him down again and crawled out the tub I cut my feet to pieces on the pieces of glass but didn't mind only wrapped the child in newspapers and put him in the suitcase with the pieces of glass. How weak as I was I washed out the tub and myself and the towel and the floor where I tracked blood from my feet.

I thought Now I'll go on home.

I thought My folks must be worried sick.

But you will understand I was so weak otherwise I would not of worried you as it turned out I did. For I lay down on the bed just to catch back my strength a minute and fell fast asleep only to wake in the midst of the night. The baby was crying from the suitcase!!! O never never did I hear such a terrible sound in my entire life except one other and of that to you dont know.

I said over and over to myself That I am too young to hear such a sound too young, for I was twenty only some weeks before. I am too young.

I stopped up my ears with my fingers but heard it still til I put the pillows over my head and cried my own sweet self so that my own noises were louder and more important. I fell asleep again that way and when next I woke we were both still and it was still night. As I pulled myself out of the bed I felt like all hades had dropped right out of me, and thought O if you knew what I done while you believed me pure as snow tho really I was. I dressed and then shook the suitcase but no sound came so left the room and checked out of the hotel saying I have to catch a bus."

Will you forgive and pity me if I tell you I walked weak as I was back across town and went down the bank into the gully at Nahano in the pitch dark under the footbridge and pulled dragged scratched the pebbles stones, and rocks til it was 2 foot deep. Then put the suitcase in and thought noone will ever trouble about it thinking it a dog or cat for many poor beasts lay there in the gully just near the little black creek-trickle. Still I covered it all up well almost dead myself and my fingers feet and internalls aching and bruised. O at last then I got myself across the gully and up the other bank and dragged myself home to see the light on from outside and in you sitting worried with my folks.

Just then it flashed through my head to say I'd been raped but I knew such a thing would kill you the very idea so evil. There's no end to my sins and you wanting everything to be perfect as it should so goodminded never suspecting anything awful of me.

After you all tell me Why Dolly you look retched sick what is wrong where have you been?

I says to you That I got sick at work.

Yes says Mama, Larry went to see your boss.

So I tell her It was on account of him, the boss I mean, that it happened. I had a little headache at the store and he gave me a powder but got the powders mixed up. I saw afterwards that he made a mistake and gave me a mild poison! Then I ran to the hospital and they cleaned me out and let me go in the evening but on the way home I fainted in Nahano. In the freezing cold noone passed or saw me but now I'm fine alright all better and you better not call the doctor for youll only get my boss in trouble. I had a hard time lying to them at the hospital so they wouldn't know.

Mama said Alright no doctor.

And Papa said Larry you better call the police again and say she was out with a girlfriend. The cops were looking for you all night Dolly.

But then after everything was fine and how sweet you were to stay and care for me the whole next two days while I was in bed, not going to work yourself, and how I made you touch my soft belly just once, just like you used to tho it was still somewhat swollen.

May came. My God there in the photo how happy I look looking so little in those tons of white chiffon and lace like an actress sitting in a bubble bath. You look happy too Larry and you were werent you? and it was true you took a Virgin to your wedding bed. Only what happened I don't know. Maybe a woman who isn't a man's wife is more interesting like I was before. Maybe they smell different. I dont know but I knew already then before the first year of our marraig was over that you were carrying on first with one then with another. How? I just knew thats all in your carress maybe which seemed as ever loving and not the same maybe like the spurt of a man that would'nt poureth forth seed. Did I ever blame you? And don't think I'm bitter because it was my just punishment for even if I didn't do wrong I did too.

O let me say it quick!

She came. *There!*

She came and said Are you Dolores, Larry's Dolores?

There that's put down at long last. Then it was we'd been married a year and a half and settled into a quiet way not yet being able to afford children but everything going a normal fashion with my knowing secretly of the other. Then in the morning while you were away at work came the knock at the front door and I saw this middleage distinguished lady standing there.

You don't know who I am, she says But I know Larry.

I smiled very kindly being twenty years younger than her at the least and anyways liking her right off I says Yes maybe I do know who you are. Wont you step inside?

In she comes and sits down in the parlor. Then to make things plain I opened the box of chocolates and looking down says You are the woman that Larry.

Good heavens, she says shaking her head, No no you are mixing me up with my sister.

O it is your sister, I says sitting down I says Could I ask you why you are calling on me?

She says My sister has had a child.

Well I got so dizzy then I tell you expecting God knows what out of her mouth.

She says It is Larry's child.

I believed it alright without a doubt, she was plain to see an honest woman and I expected the same was true for her sister. Well what could I do Larry if they had our child instead of us? But so as she wouldn't think I wasnt loyal to you I argued a little saying It was impossible.

Yes my dear, Miss Portingal said, I expected you to doubt. I haven't come to you for blackmail purposes but only to tell you that my beloved sister is dying. Larry has not seen her in months and doesn't know of the child. By profession I am a school teacher and can't possibly care for him and there is noone else but a married brother who could not possibly."

I saw what she wanted and I thought of that poor child and I interrupted her No please let me have him. How old is he?

She says That he was only born two days before.

So I combed my hair and put on my coat for it was cool though only October and went with Miss Portingal. And behold there was Goliath red as Russia in a basket in the kitchen for as you well know there was only the other room and in that one lay Myrtle. But thou red as he was how lovely he looked, a strong little rose and broke my heart he was so much like the other.

I said Could I see your sister?

Miss Portingal seemed surprised She is unconscious.

Just I says to take a peek.

So she opened the kitchen door and I looked through. O Larry

how bad off she was! She was'nt beautiful maybe she was before the child tho you werent ever much for a face only but she looked tempting alright even thin and dark as a black olive gone grey as she was. Tempting and futile.

Miss Portingal says I am old enough to be my Myrtle's mother. To be polite I shook my head You wouldn't think so at all.

But she gave me such an angry look You would if youd seen her before this tragedy. Maybe I raised her in a bad way. She was always a wild girl and her love for Larry brought her here at last to Golgotha. She is only twenty years old.

So that is where he comes from Larry and that's why I wanted to call him Goliath after Golgotha for Myrtles sake may you and her rest in the peaceful arms of the Lord. Amen!!

She closed the kitchen door saying What about adoption formalities.

I says No I'll just take him, it's better Larry doesn't know.

But she says My dear how will you explain to him and to the authorities?

I told her Never mind That I'll find the right words at the right time."

Before I left I says Did you tell me that Larry doesn't see Myrtle anymore?

She says Yes he hasn't seen her for months she says. They fought I don't know what about. Maybe she tried to make him jealous. That is her way.

As I took up the basket Miss Portingal gave me the formulas and diapers then kissed Goliath and my own self and says with wet eyes God bless you both, all three, goodbye.

Tho I saw her again four days later and from her mouth came the worst thing I ever heard in my life except the baby crying out of the valise. Well then after I left the Portingals I rode in a taxi to Nahano Park then stepped out and paid and walked over the Park then down into the gully tho it was bright noon. But noone to be seen. I went over to that very spot under the bridge where the other child lay and I put Goliath, the basket of with him in it, on the gravel and stones, then put a few little stones near his face and heart. I prayed may God Omighty give me back the soul of the other. I took the stones out of the basket and went on home.

Weren't you surprised thou when you got back from work? I never saw such a face on you before or after.

You says Where the hell does this come from?

I says From the good Lord.

Then I told you how I went walking in the fresh air over the footbridge and there saw underneath a woman leaving a basket there. When I called her What are you doing there? she looked up at me in fright and says What can I do? I have no family and am going to die very soon.

So I went down to her and indeed she was frail and delicate, dried up like an old olive tho so young.

I says But just the same you cant do that leave him here like that.

She says If you make me take him away I'll put him somewhere else. God isn't there someone who will raise and love this child? When I die what will become of him anyways?"

O did I ever believe you could be in such a rage Larry my heavens!

What the damn hell you think we're running an orphan asylum? You shouted Raise another man's bastard? Some idea.

Larry Larry no, I says He's not a bastard, she wore a ring on her finger and was all in black and told me her husband had passed away.

Well til I calmed you down as you will recall was no easy work. But then you fed him a bottle and learned to love him a little and so that was that, our child returned and we kept him. Goliath.

But Miss Portingal came a second time bearing ill tidings. It made me nervous I can tell you to see her for I hoped she wouldnt become a regular caller and drop in while you were home one day. But she was in mourning so I knew that Myrtle had gone.

I says Can I get you anything to drink a cup of tea maybe or excuse me something stronger. Because I could see her sorrow was deep.

No she says, Listen to me Dolores. Myrtle was buried today. For all her wildness she was based on a good girl. And I am an honest woman.

O dont I know that Miss Portingal I says in tears for her and poor Myrtle.

Please don't interrupt me my dear. My story is a difficult one to tell. The day you took the child Myrtle came to herself for a while

before the end and she asked me where was the baby and who would look after him when she was gone.

I told her Do'nt be afraid my precious he will be well cared for. I've given him to Larrys' wife.

Myrtle wept like an infant for a long time and before the end came she says Alice, Alice I have lied to you. It is not Larry's child.

I neednt tell you of my shock Dolores. She said no more and didn't give an explanation. She merely repeated it several times He is not Larry's child."

O love Larry if I didn't see plain black and not from Miss Portingal's dress.

She continued Who is the father Dolores I have no idea. For three days now I have been in conflicts with myself as to what I must do. But in all righteousness I felt bound in duty to tell you what I heard with my own ears. Naturally if you want to return the child you will be justified in doing so. What I will do with him I cant myself think. God knows."

So she talked on like that and I didn't know what to wonder except no I could never whoever made him part with Goliath.

Miss Portingal says You dont of course have to decide right away.

I told her No No Miss Portingal he is my child. And I cried like a baby. He is mine. He is ours.

Now that you know the facts, Miss Portingal says My heart and mind are clear. It is your decision.

Then she asked to see Goliath one last time and kissed him again but didn't kiss me now. She left saying You are a good woman. Larry is a most fortunate man. It is a lucky child that has you for its mother.

THE LOVE AND SORROW OF HENRY PIMBER

BY W. H. GASS

*T*HERE WERE still a few people in Gilean when Brackett Omensetter came. It had been dry, for a change, all day. George Hatstat's rig was mired down on the South Road even though the South Road drained into the river, and Curtis Chamlay had turned his wagon back from the western hill that afternoon, being a stubborn man, three hours after he started slipping on its yellow sides. That meant the hill should be impassable since the other slope was generally worse. Consequently everyone was very much surprised to see Omensetter's wagon come sliding down and draw its tilting peak of furniture and tools and clothing into town behind a single wretched horse. They looked at the unprotected quilts, the boxes and the tilting poles, the muddy dog, the high-lashed swaying cradle with bewildered wonder, for all day, in the distance, choked gray clouds had dropped their water in the forests, and even as they watched the wagon coming, away above the western hill, sunshine shining from it, there was a clearly defined acre of rain.

Pausing only to ask directions, Omensetter drove rapidly to the blacksmith's shop, bawling out his name before the wagon had fully stopped and announcing his occupation in an enormous raw voice as he vaulted down, his heels sinking so deeply in the soft ground it held him a moment, lurching, while he rubbed his nose on his upper arm and Matthew Watson emerged from the doorway blinking and shaking his apron. Omensetter rushed to the forge and bent over it eagerly, praising the beauty and the warmth of the fire.

He teetered as he pummeled a leg that he said was tingling, his body flushed by the coals and his shadow dancing. Mat inquired his business. Omensetter groaned and yawned, stretching with an effort that made him tremble. Then with a quiet exclamation he moved by Mat and took a piece of leather from the bench; wound it around his fingers like a coil of hair; let it slowly straighten. He held it gently in his huge brown hands, rubbing it with his thumb as he talked. He spoke in a dreamy monotonous voice whose flow he broke from time to time by peering closely at the edges of the strip he held or by bringing it sharply down against his thigh, smiling at the sound of the crack. He was very good, he said. He would start tomorrow. There was no one in the town brought up on leather, and Mat had far too much to do. That was certainly right, he thought. Mat would see how he was needed. His thumb moved rhythmically. His words were happy and assured, and if Mat's doubts were any obstacle, they calmly flowed around them. I shall work out very well and you can easily afford me. Before Omensetter left, Mat gave him the name and address of his friend — a friend who had a house which might be rented since it was empty and dissolving and sat like a frog on the edge of the river.

Henry Pimber smiled at Omensetter's muddy clothes, at the girls leaning over the side of the wagon, laughing; at the running, barking dog, the placid, remote wife; though he was conscious mainly of his own wife, quiet in the kitchen now, endeavoring to hear. Sheets of water still glittered in the road; the sky muttered; yet the wagon stood uncovered, belongings piled into a tower; and Henry felt amazement move his shoulders. Three flies walked brazenly on the screen between them. Omensetter was cross-hatched by the wires. To Henry he seemed fat and he spoke with hands which were thick and deeply tanned. His belt was tight though he wore suspenders. His dark hair fell across his face and he'd tracked mud on the porch, but his voice was musical and sweet as water, his moist lips smiled around his words, his eyes glimmered from the surface of his speech. He said he was working for Watson, mending harness and helping out. Henry noticed several squares of screen clogged with paint. There was a tear in the fellow's sleeve, and his nails had yellowed. Clay eased to the porch from his boots. Henry's wife was in the parlor then, tiptoeing. She held her skirts. He said his name was Brackett Omensetter and he came from out near

Windham. He was honest, he said. Flies already, Pimber thought, and the swatter in the barn. But they were something to fix his eyes on and momentarily he was grateful to them. Then his vision slipped beyond the screen and he received the terrible wound of the man's smile. Weakness surprised him and he leaned heavily against the door. He had a horse, Omensetter said. He had a dog, a wagon, a pregnant wife and little girls. They needed a place to stay. Not large or fancy. A room for the girls. Land enough to vegetable a little and hay the horse. Henry listened for his wife and shook his head. The screen was no protection—futile diagrams of air. He shifted his weight and the clogged squares blotched Omensetter's cheek. There was mud to his thighs. It hung on the wagon's wheels and caked the belly of the dog. His teeth weren't really clean. Henry realized that heavy-jawed and solemn as Matthew Watson was, as slow and cautious, as full of dreams of geese as he was, continually making the sound of a shotgun in his head, Omensetter had nevertheless instantly overpowered him, set his fears at rest, met his doubts, and replaced his customary suspiciousness with an almost heedless trust; yet to have sent Omensetter to see him this way was strangely out of character too, for Watson knew perfectly that the ancient Perkins house which Pimber had so recently inherited was very near the river and a yearly casualty of flood. The paint was peeling and the porch would soon be split by weeds. Henry sighed and flicked the screen. He had overpowered even Matthew. Matthew—who listened only to the high honk of the geese and his own hammer, and whose sight had been nearly burned out by the forge. Surprised, Henry found it bitter to share with anyone this man's inexplicable effects.

He had a place, he finally said. It was down the South Road near the river, but he hadn't thought of renting it on such notice, at such a time of year. There were difficulties . . . Omensetter opened out his arms and Pimber, trembling, laughed. There, you see; we'll care for it and keep it well in life. Pimber clenched his fists upon the curious phrase. His wife was in the crook of the door, holding her skirts, breathing carefully. It's down the South Road, though, he said, and near to the river. We all love the water, Omensetter said. Lucy and I are good for houses and we will promptly pay.

Who knew what sort of boots? Five narrow boards between his feet. Three flies regaining the screen. The shadows of clouds on

the panes of water. His wife gently rustling. And the stout man is talking, his hands undulating. A button on his shirt is broken. Under his arms there are stains. His stubby fingers clutch the air as though to detain it. Lis-sen. Lis-sen. The dog runs under the wagon. We have wives of the same name, Henry finds himself saying.

"There, you see," Omensetter said, as if his words included explanation.

Pimber laughed again. "It's down the South Road, I'll get the key." As he moved away he heard her knuckles snap. Behind him she stood stiff and motionless as a stick, he knew. She wouldn't like the mud on her porch either. He said the days of the week. After the habit of his father. He said the months of the year. Then he went the back way for his horse and prepared to hear about his crimes at dinner. Five boards between his boots. Mud on every step. A half a button missing. How many down? His face was broken when he laughed. Sweetly merciful God, Henry wondered, sweetly merciful God, what has struck me?

Omensetter left the wagon out all night, and the next morning he took his horse down the South Road and pulled Hatstat's rig out of the mud where three horses had skidded, kicked, and floundered the day before. Then he went to work as he'd said he would, bringing Hatstat's rig to town while his wife, daughters, and the dog moved in the wagon things and cleaned the house. Henry rose at dawn. His wife was scathing. Wrapped in the bedclothes she confronted him like a ghost. He dawdled along the road to the Perkins house until he heard the children shouting. He tried to help and handled everything he could; he peeked in boxes on the sly and sat in chairs and backed apologetically from room to room ahead of brooms and mops and mopthrown water, observing and remembering, until, obedient to some overwhelming impulse, astonished and bewildered by it though it filled him with the sweetest pleasure, he secretly thrust one of their tin spoons into his mouth. But this action frightened him, especially the delight he took in it, and he soon apologized once more for being in the way, and left.

Hatstat thanked Omensetter graciously and he and Olus Knox, who, with his horse, had helped Hatstat the day before and got mud rubbed through his clothes and lumped up in his crotch, said nice things to people afterward of Omensetter's luck and thought, at the same time, of flood.

Rain fell a week and the river rose, water moving against water, a thin sheet of earth and air between the meeting rise and fall. The rain beat steadily on the river. The South Road drained. Clay banks slid quietly away, pools grew; runnels became streams, streams torrents. Planks laid across the street sank from sight. Everyone wore hip boots who had them. Everyone worried for the land and houses south.

You didn't tell him about the river, did you, she would suddenly say. Whenever Henry was at home now his wife quietly followed him and in a venomous low voice struck with the question. She waited for the middle of an action like filling his pipe or settling himself to read, often when he had no thought that she was near, while shaving or buttoning his pants. You didn't tell him about the water, did you? How are you going to feel when the river's up and you're down there in a boat, getting him out? Or don't you intend to? Is it dangerous there when the river floods? Mightn't you drown?

"I might, I might. Would it please you?"

"I'd have no husband then to shame me . . . You didn't tell him about the river, did you?"

"He knows," he said; but his wife would offer him a sweet and gentle smile and sadly turn away. He would try to read or strop his blade — continue whatever it was she'd broken into — but she would suddenly be back again.

"Mightn't he?"

Before he could direct an answer she'd have passed into another room.

"He saw the waterline on the house, you mean? That's how he knows?"

"Lucy, I told him it was down the South Road."

She laughed. "He knows the South Road, does he? Isn't he from Windham? So you told him it was down the South Road. Did he see the line on the house or the moss on the trees?"

"Oh for god's sake stop."

"Those wretched things he had piled in his wagon will be afloat."

"No."

"He didn't seem to care, though, did he, if they got wet or not. Doesn't strike me as a good sign of a responsible tenant. You'd want

to know that kind more than a minute, I should think, what with mud on his boots and clothes and a wagon full of trash wide open to the weather.”

“Lucy, please.”

“Them and that baby in her . . . the land so low.”

“Shut up.” When he rose from his chair or put down his pipe or slammed the strap against the wall, then she would go, but not before she’d asked how much he’d got for it.

The rain stopped but the river rose anyway. It crossed the South Road with a rush. It filled woods. It drowned ponds. It carried away fences. Receding from its mark, it left silt sticking to the sides of trees. It flung skeins of slime over bushes. It took more than it gave. Olus Knox reported that the water came within thirty yards of Omensetter’s side yard fence, and it seemed to Henry that more rain had fallen than had in years, yet in the past the Perkins house had always borne the stain of flood high on its peeling sides. Things are running for Omensetter, he said to Curtis Chamlay with what he hoped was a knowing smile. Curtis said apparently, and that was that.

2

Henry Pimber became convinced that Brackett Omensetter was a foolish, careless man.

He bought some chickens from Olus Knox, among them one old hen whose age, Knox told Henry afterward, he thought his buyer hadn’t noticed. The next morning the hen was gone and all the rest upset. The girls soon found her. They were diving, hiding under the lifting fog, bending low to see beneath it the supernatural world and one another’s bare legs stalking giants. The hen was dead by the open well and the dog crouched growling at its lip. Henry drove by to collect the rent that evening because his wife insisted that he go in person — face to face is safer, she said — and Omensetter showed him the eyes of the fox reflect the moon. The girls swung in graceful turns around the hole, their dresses palely visible. His eyes are like emeralds, they said. They are green emeralds and yellow gold. They are borrowed from the fire at the center of the earth and they see like signals through the dark. Then Omensetter told them of foxes’ eyes: how they burn the bark from

trees, put spells on dogs, blind hens, and melt the coldest snow. To Henry, kneeling gingerly upon a rotten board, they were dim points of red, and his heart contracted at the sight of their malice.

"How do you plan to get him out?" he asked, rising in front of Omensetter's chest.

"You can see how badly the well wanted him. He'll have to stay where he's been put. That's the way it happened and maybe the well will tire and throw him out."

Henry tried to laugh. Of course it was a joke. The kneeling had somehow made him dizzy and a button was missing from Omensetter's coat. Our fox is in our well, our fox is in our well, our well was empty belly, now our fox is in our well, the girls sang, whirling more rapidly. "Say, be careful there," he said, "those boards are rotten and one is missing; that's how the fox fell in; don't you. That cover should have been repaired." It was his well really, and he fell silent when he remembered it. Then he tried a cautious, apologetic smile. It might be the fox that had been stealing Knox's chickens, he thought. It would be Omensetter's luck, certainly, to have the fox pick out the bitterest hen only to gag on her as he fled and bitterly throw himself down a hole. What a terrible thing it must have been — to have the earth open at the moment he took the hen in his mouth, tumbling him into such a muddy belly. Cramped, bruised, his nose pressed into the damp wall, his coat matted and his tail fouled, with darkness all the way to the arriving stars, he would bloody his paws and break his teeth against its sides and then wear out his body with repeated leaping. By morning . . . hunger, and the line of the sun sinking along the wall like draining water, the fetid smells . . . bitter exhaustion of spirit. No wonder he burned with malice. Those are giant's eyes you see down there, Omensetter was telling the girls. The well goes through to the giant lands. They squealed. Omensetter struck Henry heavily on the back.

"But what are you going to do?"

Omensetter swung happily about the well with the girls, their bodies casting a faint shadow on the yellowish grass. "Naa-thing," they sang, "naa-thing."

"But that's cruel, you can't do that, you'll have to get him out. He'll starve down there." And Henry thought: how can he bear that terrible pair of eyes?

"He'll have to stay where the hen has put him," Omensetter said. "Spring will float him to the top."

"It's cruel, and dangerous besides." Oh yes, just too, if that is justice. Beautifully appropriate. Some day the earth will swallow me for all I've swallowed. "I'll help you board it up. The girls —"

"They enjoy it. If I covered it they'd cry." The girls pulled gayly at their father's arms. He began to whirl like a ribboned pole. "How long . . . do you think . . . those eyes . . . will last?"

Henry held unsteadily to a sapling. "You have a gun. He must be shot. That would be merciful."

"The well wants him . . . hoooh . . . it's getting dark . . . girls please . . . stop."

"I'll do it then," Henry said, and he imagined the shot leaping from the barrels of his gun to rush at the fox. What's more I'll board it up tomorrow, he decided.

Henry drove home recklessly, debating Omensetter's dancing image. His speech was eloquent. Cruel, furious words, oaths unforgivable, escaped him. At first he was startled by the sound of his own voice — it was a hushed and gentle evening — but then he partly rose and shouted at his horse. The image grinned, putting its face between its legs, somersaulting. Beast. Beast. No better than the fox yourself. A dancing bear. His oaths, his threats, his accusations echoed and re-echoed in his ears, each time more fiercely, more ashamed, until he could not bear to hear them. Lately in his dreams he had known the wonder of cool sweet weather, a luminous atmosphere, clouds and winds that were orderly, and the undemanding peace of antique landscapes, clear and open between trees, with their wondrously gay figures, of which one was he, resting in company by a stream. At first these visions had embarrassed him but they persisted, growing steadily more explicit, and he found his pleasure in them more and more; they were more real; and he felt strengthened, curiously, and soothed when he was in them, despite the turmoil of his older life which sometimes overtook him. Now he could cry against his ghost when it rose from the bed to accuse him: do not pursue me, I am not the man. The buggy careened. His speed had begun to frighten him — his shouts had caused his horse to run — and when the buggy again lurched perilously, he immediately pulled up, although he felt he had betrayed his anger to his cowardice. It was this soiling prudence that defeated him.

Omensetter takes no pains with what is his, Henry began complaining. Thoughtlessly he risks us both. Wrong . . . wrong . . . even though he's lucky and he trusts his luck . . . Of course he doesn't really know anything, the innocent brute, he's no better than the fox . . . inhuman. Nevertheless it was true — and Henry fell into a quieter reverie — he was a wide and happy man. He could whistle as the cardinal whistles in the deep snow, or whirr like the shy 'white rising from its cover, or be the lark achuckle at the sky. He knew the earth. He put his hands in water. He smelled the clean fir smell. He listened to the bees. And he laughed his deep, loud, wide and happy laugh whenever he could — which was often, long, and joyfully.

It would be lovely to kick leaves. Not so simple at his age. Yet he'd seen Omensetter wading eagerly in puddles like a boy. He could do as he pleased.

It would be lovely to tell lies so beautifully they had to be believed. The well went through to the giant lands. Why not? What was the matter with that? Was that more real or less than Mrs. Henry Pimber's firm prim mouth? or her festive unlatching hands? No one thought the well went through to the giant lands. Not even his girls. Like Omensetter, they did not need belief in their believing.

Wading in the water. Rolling hoops and hollering in the street. Pasting kites and running in the meadows at the end of a string. Yet he took no care of what was his. To trust to luck? And so be lucky? He told stories that had the smell of meadow in them. When he told a journey you could hear the wagoning, and there was something worshipful in the way he handled water. Going with him anywhere was love. O Henry, Henry, come along, come along with me. To trust to luck? And so be lucky? For what he did he did so simply that it seemed a miracle. It eased from him, his life did, like the smooth broad crayon line of the man who drew your cartoon at the fair. He had an ease impossible to imitate, for the moment you were aware, the instant you tried . . . who was the fool who said that life came naturally? Henry loved him. It was a word men didn't use of one another. He loved him so. That way he was expensive. God. He came high.

When he reached home his wife immediately asked him if he had the rent and how much was it, but he passed through the house in a daze, wild and frantic, and went off again with his gun without

answering, so she had to yell after him — what fool thing are you up to now — but she would see, he thought, bitterly observing that she hadn't thought of him as off to murder or to hunt but only as a fool bent on his foolishness; and in the back of Omensetter's unlighted house, not bothering anyone, he shot the twin moons out with both barrels. The shot screamed on the well sides and one pellet flew out and struck him on the arm so hard through his jacket that it stuck, but he, with great effort, while the cool stars watched, paid no mind to his wound, hearing the fox thrash and go still. Furthermore I'll board it up tomorrow, he thought.

Driving home slowly, his joy draining away and leaving him fearful and cold, Henry remembered how, as a boy, he had waited at the top of the cellar stairs for his father to emerge, and how, when his father's waist was level with his eyes, without a motive or any kind of feeling that he recognized, he had struck him a terrible blow in the stomach, driving the air from his father's lungs and forcing him to bend abruptly, dropping his startled face near. Henry's mouth had filled with saliva; the base of his tongue had tingled; he had taken breath. Yet thank God he had run, weeping instead. Saliva washed over his teeth as he fled. He remembered, too, the sound of apples falling slowly on the stairs. His legs had been the first of him to be appalled. They had fallen apart like sticks.

Killing the fox had given him the same fierce heedless kind of joy, and now he leaned back in the buggy, careless of the reins, weak, waiting his punishment. Indeed he did feel strange. He had sensed his past too vividly. His head rolled with the road. He knew, of course, it was Omensetter he had struck at. He took no care with their life, that man. Luck like his did not come naturally. It had to be deserved. Anger began very faintly to stir inside him again, and he was able to steady his head. But the night was black; the moon and stars were under clouds; the world around him had been erased. He sank wearily in his clothes and let his head wag loosely in the circle of his collar.

Omensetter said to his wife when it is spring we'll go to Gilean on the Ohio. That is a fine place for the boy you're making. The air is clear. Therefore, when the snow sank quietly away into the creeks; therefore, when the rivers had their bellies brown and urgent; when the wind went hungry about the bare-limbed trees and clouds were streamers; then Omensetter said the time is coming and

we must be ready. They washed their wagon. They ironed their Sunday things. They braided the hair of their daughters. They did everything that didn't matter. It made them feel good. They brushed the dog. They piled the firewood left from winter neatly. They pinched each other a good deal on the behind. Everything that didn't matter and made them feel good, they did. It rained a week. Then Omensetter said it seems that we are ready, shall we go? They piled their belongings on the back of the wagon. They heaped them up, one on top of the other: flaming tufted comforts and tattercrossed quilts, plump bags of clothing and sacks of shoes and sewing and a linen tablecloth with stains that were always hidden by the plates; two ladderbacks, a stool and a Boston rocker, a bench of quite hard and eloquent oak, and a drop-leaf table whose top was carved into faces and initials by no one they ever knew; jars, a framed view of the Connecticut River, rubber boots; and in boxes: wooden spoons and pans and stove lids and pot-handle holders and pots, tin silverware and nickel-plated medallions and a toothpick, somewhere, thinly tinted gold with a delicate chain, a mezzotint of St. Francis feeding squirrels, some tools for shaping leather, two pewter goblets and thirteen jelly glasses, seven books (three of which were about birds by the Reverend Stanley Cody); a collection in tobacco tins of toy rings and rice-bead necklaces, amber-colored stones and tiny china figurines and stamped-out metal dogs and cats and horses and two lead hussars in tall hats and bent guns whose red paint had all but worn away; ten and twenty penny nails, dolls made from sewn chains of stuffed cloth, small dishes and large crocks, a paper cockade, four flat spiders dead a long time and saved under a stone in the hearth; a saw, a hammer, square, a sledge, other things that were called dolls but were more like pressed grass or pine cones or strangely shaped sticks or queer rocks; any kind of shell whatever — turtle's, robin's, snail's; and not in boxes: a tight bucket and an unassembled plow, a spade, a shovel and an axe, a churn, a wooden tub and washboard, and a great white ironstone basin and a great white ironstone pitcher and a great white enamel pot with a chipped lid that was terribly cold in the morning; a shotgun and some harness and a spinning wheel, a compass in a leather case that always pointed to the west of south, and arrows for the unborn boy to shoot at falling leaves and sparrows in the fall. They piled them up, one on top of the other, until

there was a tower in the wagon. On the top they lashed the cradle. The tower teetered when the wagon rolled. They said maybe everything will fall into the road but they didn't really think so, and they didn't trouble to cover anything. Of course the rain would stop, they said, and it did. Omensetter hitched the horse to the wagon. He hopped up with a great flourish and addressed the world with his arms. Everyone enjoyed that. Omensetter's wife swung up too. She rested her arm on his leg and she squeezed his knee. Omensetter's daughters whooped up the back. They snuggled under quilts. They made a house in the tower. Everyone said a prayer for the snowman dead a week. Then Omensetter chuckled, the dog barked, and they set out for Gilean on the Ohio where the air was clear and good for boys. They left behind them, where they'd kissed and talked, water dripping lightly from the eaves of their last and happy home.

Upon the beach Henry Pimber rested, passing five white carefully gathered stones from hand to hand. Omensetter's darkened house stood in his head amid clipped grass. Cold dew struck him and the sound of water in the dust, soft and distant, like slow steps that reach through sleep, possessed him. The pebbles fell, one by one, to the sand. Henry struggled with the urge to turn his head. Instead he bent and picked the pebbles up. They were softest pearls — like sweetest teeth. And Lucy's lamp went through his house and climbed the stairs. He flung the stones. They circled out, taking the light. One sank in the water's edge; one clicked on a greater stone; one found the sand; another brushed by the marshy weeds. The last lay at his feet like a dead moth. He drove home slowly because of a clouding moon.

Henry liked to tell of everything he saw whenever he passed Omensetter's house, although he was carefully silent about the fox, and neither he nor anyone who listened thought how strange it was they took such interest in the smallest things their newest neighbor did, for Omensetter cast an interest like a shade. It was as though one could, by knowing when his beans went in or when he cut his firewood for washing, hoed, or simply walked a morning in the oak and maple woods like a tree among the trees himself, learn his secret, whatever his secret was, since it must somehow be the sum of these small things all grown together, for as Doctor Orcutt was so fond of pointing out, every measle was a sign of the disease, or as

Mat Watson always said, every turn of wind or rift of cloud was a parcel of the acreage of weather.

Henry asked him how he knew it was a boy, for girls, he said, were also known to kick, and Edna Hoxie, thin enough, she said, to crawl inside and pull a fat one out, stopped by to offer her services for the time. But Omensetter said he knew. He said that birthing would be easy for a boy who'd learned to crawl already. You may be disappointed, Brackett, Olus Knox has three, Henry said. Each time his wife conceived he hoped like you, and he has three. He finds it hard without a boy, with three who'll trade his name away, and now she's past her time. It could be just the same with you. I hope not . . . but it could be just the same. You shouldn't count too much on what comes out of her this fall or figure from how hard the baby kicks or from how high it rides. Still Omensetter laughed. He said he knew. He'd read the signs.

At first the wound was merely sore and then the arm was stiff. Get Doctor Orcutt for the love of God, Henry said, and went to bed. There the stiffness spread into the neck. Lucy learned in Gilean that Orcutt was with Decius Clark at the bottom of the county. When Watson and Omensetter arrived, Henry had ceased to speak and his face grew tight as they watched. A shotgun wound? Then slippery elm, I think, Mat said. Lucy wept, running from room to room with balls of cloth in her arms. The lips drew back from the teeth, the eyelids flattened. Opium, I think, Mat said. The body bent. The room should be dark, I think, Mat said. Lucy stumbled up and down the stairs and the jaws at last completely locked. She was drawn in by the wheeze and when Omensetter asked her suddenly: have you any beets? the rags rolled out of her arms. Henry, in his agony, was sure he saw his poor friend Matthew leading Lucy to another room. Through the wall he watched her try to kiss him when he helped her on the bed, and tear wildly at her clothes. Mat then tiptoed to the hall and shut himself in its largest closet. Around him linens, towels, and female things were shelved.

Omensetter made a poultice of mashed raw red beet and bound it to the wound with rags and to the palms of the hands. Henry felt his sight fail as his lips yawned and air strenuously pushed itself between his teeth. Mat observed them from the doorway, apparently calm; but there seemed to be a button broken on his shirt and

a tear in his sleeve. Then his body melted. It's up to Henry and the lockjaw now, Omensetter said; it's just between them. I'll stay, Mat said, he needs some company. Omensetter's hands were stained with beet. He doesn't care, he said, his body also dwindling. You loosened her clothing, good, Henry heard Omensetter say as his footsteps faded on the stairs, now she's asleep. Mat held to Henry's hand while Henry whistled steadily like steam.

Orcutt came by evening, tore the poultice off the wound, gave opium and aconite, forced lobelia and capsicum into the mouth, stared at the bandaged palms but did not touch the wrappings, waited for vomiting. Watson said to Henry afterward that in his opinion the jaw had already begun to soften, and he was not surprised when the vomiting began. I'd have sworn it was hopeless, Doctor Orcutt said. The Reverend Jethro Furber came to pray and the jaw was loose by morning. Edna Hoxie, midwife, brazen, asked Omensetter for the recipe and bragged to everyone that she'd got it.

3

That Omensetter had a secret no one doubted now. Talk was open and continual. Everyone recalled the mud around the wagon wheels, the high-lashed swaying cradle, the girls, the dog, the knitting wife. So often had their arrival been related, with such gusto and particularity, that those who had not witnessed it, like Henry, soon remembered it as real and would have sworn sincerely they were there. But Henry's own salvation was the central thing, and Henry was frequently vexed to the point of tears, weak as he still was, by all the strangers who roughly butted his world. Opinion blew like Chamlay's gilded cockerel, bright whichever way it faced, but quivering. Nothing escaped, no fact, no chance conjecture even, that did not wildly run the town until some theory hung it by the heels. And there it aged. Eyed from every angle, sniffed and poked with sticks, it was carefully considered and appreciated. At first consigned by most to God and so to the Reverend Jethro Furber, though by a smaller group to Science and hence to Doctor Orcutt, still by a queer and unimaginative few to the will and constitution of Henry himself (to his own intense embarrassment and shame), the cure was now almost universally awarded to the beet root poultice and the luck of Brackett Omensetter. But what did this amount to? This credited the cure to . . . what? Edna Hoxie had an in-

crease of trade, though Maggie Scanlon, unwedded, large, scoffed at the question. Don't he always get what he wants, she said. He's happy, ain't he, the sonofabitch. I wish to god I was.

For Henry his illness was a joy and agony that still went on. Whole days it rained continually and water spilled out of dry containers. He would sit in the sun with a blanket on his knees and feel the rain come down on the stiff summer leaves and fly from the dusty spouts, and he would beg the man's pardon constantly, as weak and palsied in his chair, as loose from his will, as he'd been during the first days of his recovery, or during those moments when he'd hid uselessly from Omensetter behind his screen. Then he would wail, frightening his wife. Again and again he would find it necessary to lock his teeth, for he felt he mouthed a nest of serpents, interwoven as with love, hissing, moving sinuously against his cheeks, yet moving without uncoiling. Then they slid through his head and peered angrily out of his eyes. I had no preparation, he would say to himself. That was the trouble. Everything has changed. I had no preparation; I wasn't warned; I couldn't know. I always thought I'd live with usual men in a usual world. But he'd lived with himself all these years like a stranger — and with everybody else. At the thought he would wail again, bringing his wife: frightened, enraged, implacably fierce and strong.

But there were also times, alone, in fields, in vacant rooms, when Henry seemed at last to touch him. It was as if he were there in person inside him. He could walk to the door or sit in a chair; yet he lay between sleeping and waking. He wanted to open his eyes, but he was anxious lest he withdraw too soon. He listened and he heard things, he felt and he saw, sometimes as in a dream, sometimes as in waking life. His hair stood on end. He cried and felt happy. His heart swelled with pain and he seemed borne up in glory.

Henry remembered coming. Clouds were living in the river, Gilean was resting by it, the air so clear. There was every house out honest and every barn banked proper to the weather. The trees were beautiful and bare and the tracks of the wagons glistened. They cut the pattern of Gilean's ordinary ways. Like the gipsy who took your fortune from your hand, you could see what your life would be.

On the way they'd all been singing "Rose Aylmer," a song he'd heard sung so strangely once he never forgot it. The words were

high and fine beyond his understanding but he liked their sound. Then sometimes they counted kinds of birds. There were rings in the pools of water by the road and the air was clean as it is after rain. Henry thought how exciting it would be for the boy to live by the river, to catch fish and keep frogs, to grow up with good excitement.

But his wife would come and jar him loose. Age had beautifully lined her jaw. Her knuckles were huge. She rattled tins and silverware in drawers. She had a smile that she kept publicly to herself.

"All right, all right, what is it? what are you thinking?" she said.

"Nothing."

"Nothing! You should see your face. Of your mother, I imagine, rest her soul. Why do you spend so much time at the shop? And in this weather — it's so hot. What do you talk about down there?"

"Nothing. My mother, why my mother? You never liked my mother. Is that why I'm supposed to be thinking of her now?"

"Doctor Orcutt thinks you're strengthening. He told me so."

If he loved a shadow in a dream, Henry thought, ought that shadow to be kind and love him too? He laughed, turning his wife sharply around. Illusion, he cried grandly to himself, still smiling, be true to me! Falsehood, be faithful!

"Laugh if you like. Oh you like being sick. With me to wait, wait, wait on you like a slave. I know what you're like if no one else does. You're strong enough. But you like to have me waiting on you, fetching, fixing, fetching, like a dog. That's all right. Time's near up for that, you hear? Orcutt says you're strengthening."

Still weak and pale, he would go to the shop to sort his feelings. He would sit so quietly within the shadows behind the forge that visitors scarcely noticed he was there. It was like the effect of his illness, for after a time of pain and darkness he thought his eyes had cleared and he had watched from his bed as if from out of the world. It had been as he imagined it was like to be invisible. Your eyes were open. People looked into them but they didn't think you saw. They were less than a mirror, no more than a painting of eyes. The sickness was nothing. Many times he had struggled to say that he could hear. Being stretched to pieces was nothing. Many times he'd tried to shout I can see, I can see you — hissing instead. Fighting for breath was nothing. Burning was nothing. Locked in a

shrinking boot of flesh, hour after hour he remembered prayers.

The child of Decius Clark, said Doctor Orcutt through his beard, is very bad. A bee stung him six weeks come Tuesday on the neck. You never saw a bigger swelling. Used to be a potter. Quit. He's farming now or trying to. Not much account. I won't collect. Orcutt spat. Let's see that finger Matthew smashed, he said, and his tone conveyed a quality of concern that made Mat blush, while Henry, observing it, had his heart fail. It's all healed up by now or fallen off but let me see it anyway. You are a bastard, Truxton, Watson said. You took on so about the way Brackett was neglecting it, I thought I'd see. No charge. The nail grow back? Mat told me that he knocked it clean away — that a fact? Omensetter held his hand out silently. Orcutt grinned and showed his brown-stained teeth. Seems like you've done my work, Mat, that's quite a brave scar. Always happens, cut like that. Like what, Omensetter said. Well first you cut yourself on one of them dirty knives, right? then maybe you get some acid in it, correct? Swell up did it? Red? I'll bet Mat knocked the pus clean out. Lucky. Orcutt dropped the hand and the arm fell muscleless. You was holding, I expect. Not a very careful knife — a sledge. Next time you infect a finger, see me first. They stared at one another. You're mighty lucky, mister, all around, Orcutt said. Then he asked Hatstat how the fishing was. Rotten, Hatstat said. Always is, this time of year, the doctor said. Never is, said Hatstat, you know that. Is this time, though, the doctor said. They should be up, the weather's still cool enough. Ah George, they never is, you want them to. Ain't that right, Brackett, the doctor asked, but Omensetter didn't answer, vacant-eyed. Mat fumbled with his tools. Henry felt an unreasonable oppression. It was fiercely hot by the forge. Well he's a friendly sort, Clark is, said Doctor Orcutt, spitting. Not much account. I won't collect. But friendly. His wife is taking on about the boy but Clark is calm, I will say that. He's calm. How's your infection, Henry, it all gone? Out a little early ain't you? It's been weeks, Henry mumbled, backing deeply in the shop. Home remedy has killed an awful lot, Henry. Could have lost that arm you know. Fix your horseshoe game permanent. Does Brackett play? We won't let him, George Hatstat said. Too bad, I'd like to see that. He wiped his mouth again and spat a running stain. Everyone was si-

lent. The child of Decius Clark is very bad, said Doctor Orcutt once again, but Decius is a friendly sort, and calm.

A hen's first egg is always female. Orcutt burned his spit. Mares who've seen the stallion late have colts. Scientific fact. Luther Hawkins tested the blade of his knife with his thumb, then sighted along it and winked at its tip. Ain't it the month? he said; they take turns, don't they, every other one? Orcutt shook his head. All thought a while in silence. The iron was a pale rose. I read a Swiss professor, what was his name? . . . Thury. That's it, Thury; he says the same. Danielson, downstate, has tried it. Works with cows. Works fine. Fact. Orcutt showed his teeth and pulled his beard. I couldn't say about the ladies. Henry giggled against his will. It's out of my experience, Watson said, and George Hatstat laughed like a whistling train. Orcutt hitched about and peered at Henry through the dark. How's Lucy these days, Henry? Henry tried to answer but he found his mouth was dry. Watson put tongs on the iron. Orcutt rolled his chew. His lips gleamed. She ought to get out more. Wars, Watson said. He began hammering. Wars, he shouted, more boys . . . replace dead ones. Sparks flew in arcs and showers to the floor. Not even Mat dared speak. Doctor Orcutt wiped his mouth and stared at Henry through the rain of sparks. The bar, reluctant, bent. The doctor hitched back, tilting his chair. He gazed solemnly at the ceiling where a spider dropped itself by jerks from a beam. Omensetter threaded a needle. There was a lull in the hammering and Henry's ears sang. Each man looked morose and thoughtful. Finally Orcutt said — lucky to be alive by god — in a low but outraged voice. The hammering began again. The cool iron jumped. Luther Hawkins moved the blade of his knife with caution, rolling back a sliver like a piece of skin, and Hatstat followed him intently while Omensetter stabbed a piece of leather with his needle. Orcutt straightened and spat heavily at the dropping spider. The spit bore it off. At this the doctor slapped his knee and stood. There're authorities I've read who say that males are made in special weather, and there're those who claim the rapture — here he chuckled — the rapture has to be before the stroke of twelve. He hefted his bag. You rest easy Henry, eh? No lifting. No climbing. No spading. That sort of thing. He ran a finger between his collar and his neck and sighed noisily. Or it's

the length of the prick — how far it throws the seed. He combed his beard. Whewee. The doctor remained a moment. All that's manure, he said. Manure. Then he strode away. Henry watched the forge until it burned his eyes.

Later Curtis Chamlay looked in to ask if anyone intended fishing in the morning, and Luther Hawkins, admiring the point on his stick, carrying on the conversation in his head, chuckled. Dogs don't care, he said. It's a fact. Then George Hatstat said: know what Blenker said that Edna Hoxie told his wife? . . . if she douched with milk she'd have a girl but if she squirted soda up, she'd have a boy. Damn fat Dutchman, how does he get on? Hawkins jabbed with his stick and picked dirt from a crack. Blenker ain't Dutch, Hatstat said, just ask him. No one's got one long enough to get a working distance past that belly . . . hell. Bent like a pin, must be. Curly like a pig's. Hoxie told her boys swole the right teat more, Hatstat said, and girls make special aches in the left side. In the ass, said Hawkins, in the ass is where. He began to draw in the shavings with his stick, laughing. It's good red meat that does it, Chamlay said. Beef. It's got some chemical. I know for a fact — it's what you chew along. The bar began to glow. Hawkins pulled at his ear. I saw one in a bottle at a fair . . . pickled . . . wrinkled up and pale . . . like a pig. Mat hefted the hammer impatiently. It depends on what she eats, Chamlay insisted. Hatstat made a disrespectful noise. Oh yes George, honestly; if she eats meat and works on hard and steady, she makes herself a boy, but if she lolls about and stuffs on candy — then she has a girl. Naw, Hawkins said; you eat it regular and all you grow's a beard. Chamlay grinned. Now you've got boys George, hey? But Rosa Knox? Henry began to squirm. He blew his nose. He began to cough. When Rosa's pregnant all she eats is sugar buns, Chamlay said loudly; ask Splendid Turner if she don't. Luther Hawkins nodded. Fact, he said, a scientific fact. I wonder what that little Perkins weasel filled Maggie Scanlon's belly with. Ah, that bitch — she'll give birth to dogs. The white bar lay upon the anvil and Mat's hammer thundered. Afterward, when the bar hushed in the rain water, they discussed fishing for a long time. Olus Knox had come and he was always eloquent about it. That is everyone but Omen-setter did, who sewed silently, a look of intense and painful bewilderment on his face.

4

"I couldn't sleep. Did you notice how restless I was and wound in the sheets? The weather must be changing. I'm always restless then." She filled her cheeks with air.

Henry dipped his hand in the wind, ignoring his wife's voice. Now the leaves would be learning of the cold. He turned his hand, letting the wind pass between his fingers. Cool as hill water it seemed to flow from the pale clouds. This is how it feels, he thought, like a wet cheek drying. The wind runs through the cup of Omensetter's hands. Time goes coolly through the funnel of his fingers — click, click, click — like water over stones. When he lately felt the wind he seldom had another feeling; yet there were moments, as if in dream, when he could plunge his hand into the air and feel the stream at the lip of Being, and the hesitating water. There was a bather at the precipice with breasts as great as God's, nipples as the berry bush, bright as frost. Corn golden hair was gathered to His thighs. Not in my image. Nothing like me. But in the dream that disabled him, he was afloat on the brink, poised above the incredible gulf like a bird, while each minute frightened him by passing over. With his hand on his ears he could feel them falling. Below lay an empty plain where the bright stream dried. It became a road that thinned to a rail in the cold horizon. He heard the roar of a miracle coming, a long beak looking for snakes.

There was a soft plop as the air rushed out. "It's going to rain, you can see that."

Henry withdrew his hand. "The rent is due. I'll walk."

"Walk. Walk. He'll walk too. You'll pass."

"Yes," he said, fetching his coat.

"Is walking what the doctor ordered? Whoo. Our room was stuffy as a tomb last night. Didn't you feel it? I don't want him here heaven knows, that beast. He's like an animal. Breathes like an animal. Awf. Smells like an animal. I don't want him here."

"He won't come here. That's why I'm going."

"Oh no it's not. He'd come. You want to meet him away from me that's all. You should stay here. He's just a beast, a beast. With her big lately he's been long without her — unless he never minds her pain."

"Lucy, please."

"Now they've had that boy it'll be a decent while before he'll dare to come at her again, I should think. Imagine that fat creature sprawled on top of you. Fur on him there like a tom cat's fur, I'll bet."

"For christ's sake!"

"O pooh, don't be a prude." She plunged her spoon into a bowl. "I wonder how poor Matthew can afford him," she said in a subdued voice, as if to herself. "He can't make as much as his rent surely." The batter cracked and she smiled.

"I wish to god —"

"Salt. Wasn't it last time I left out the salt? You remember. They were flat. You complained all evening and it was wretchedly hot." Sometimes she made Henry think of steam — of something dangerously vaporous and white — but she stood at the counter now as stiff and metallic as the spoon whose edge she wore around and around in the bowl she pressed into her stomach. "Well he works hard and I'm sure he's worth what he's getting. You're down there most of the day since your sickness."

"Since he saved my life. How you hate him for it."

"Oh for sweet sakes, Hennie, you know you always denied it. You never said he saved your life before. That sort of magic? You only want to rile me." She suddenly turned to him with a weak sad face. "I've a lot to complain of myself, Hennie, not just about salt, Hennie — a lot to complain of. You know our life . . . and . . . oh you oughtn't to do me this way, Hennie." Her face grew hard again. "Well. Wasn't that what you said? It was Doctor Orcutt, I thought, you gave your gratefuls to. Hoosh. My arm tires easy. In this kitchen. You should have seen him in this kitchen — my personal place. Chopping beets. These counters aren't my height. Well they weren't made for me but for your mother of course. He stained the wood in them badly, you can see it — there — there — see — over there — and here — and there — there — ah the dirty beast." She released the spoon and put her palm on the counter. She patted the wood. "Your mother, now, could stir a day and never sigh more than her usual."

"Well he works. He's handy."

"Oh I'm sure Matthew never regrets him. He *is* handy." She set the bowl down with a jar. "What an easy fool to dance the tune for both of you."

"Mat pays him properly, and after all, he's grown."

"Hoo. He's huge. Takes care of his children on that, does he? And his wife too? She must be mighty saving. What is he owing you?"

"He pays, he pays."

"Lalee. Of course he pays. He's what, if I weren't such a well-raised lady, I would call a poor stupid bastard — a poor stupid bastard."

"Well Lucy, you *are* a lady."

She looked at him sharply. "More than you're a decent man," she said. Then she began to cry and turned from the counter to blow her nose.

Doctor Orcutt, thought Henry. I hate him. His teeth slide in his beard and his eyes cross.

"Come out of the door. Are you hearing me? Henry? When he was here he stared at me like an owl."

"You should comb your hair."

"It was indecent — how he stared. Stared. He's just an animal. Hairy as a bear. His head turns the whole way around."

"Well I'm going."

"Go then. You'll pass in the woods. Must you be walking there? You're catching cold again. I saw you shiver."

"No."

"Like an old dog going everywhere there is a patch of sun to sit and shiver in. No one ever comes to see us. People used to — Gladys, Rosa, Mat. No one now since you were sick. He always takes the wood path. Why?"

"It saves time."

"Time? Oh dear. Time. The animal. Smell him. There's no time for him, there's only himself. Like a cow whose bowels are moving. Heavens, time. What do you want from him? You'll never get it whatever it is. He cares for no one, don't you know that? Not even you, Henry. Oh look out! You're letting the wind in. Shut the door."

The path took Henry Pimber past the slag across the meadow creek where his only hornbeam hardened slowly in the southern shadow of the ridge and the trees of the separating wood began in rows as the lean road in his dream began, narrowing to nothing in the blank horizon, for train rails narrow behind anybody's journey;

and he named them as he passed them: elm, oak, hazel, larch and chestnut tree, as though he might have been the fallen Adam passing them and calling out their soft familiar names, as though familiar names might make some friends for him by being spoken to the unfamiliar and unfriendly world which he was told had been his paradise. In God's name when was that? When had that been? For he had hated every day he'd lived. Ash, birch, maple. Every day he thought would last forever, and the night forever, and the dawn drag eternally another long and empty day to light forever; yet they sped away, the day, the night clicked past as he walked by the creek by the hornbeam tree, the elders, sorrels, cedars and the fir; for as he named them, sounding their soft names in his lonely skull, the fire of fall was on them, and he named the days he'd lost. It was still sorrowful to die. Eternity, for them, had ended. And he would fall, when it came his time, like an unseen leaf, the bud that was the glory of his birth forgot before remembered. He named the aspen, beech, and willow, and he said aloud the locust when he saw it leafless like a battlefield. In God's name when was that? When had that been?

Omensetter was in his large coat today. Pieces appeared between the trees. Then tousled hair. Round hot face: determined, splotted, Pebbly teeth. His arm was lifted in a wave. This disappeared. His hand grew from a limb. At first Henry stood still; then he dared to run. He craned his neck, went to tiptoe, stepped up on a rock, and once he even wavered the length of a fallen tree. His eyes flew back and forth and up and down in an effort to put the figure together. Omensetter crossed a small glade, in full view, but to Henry's surprise his feet were lost behind some trivial bushes, then a branch leaped in front of Henry to cut the body at the waist, while finally, just before he vanished entirely into the woods again, his head was hidden by a tuft of leaves at the end of a thin, irrelevant twig. Henry had felt certain of that empty space . . . certain. His pulse grew noisy in his ears. We must take care, he thought, everything is against us.

"The elder's pods won't hang through winter I'm afraid," Omensetter said. "The moss is thick and the 'pillar's fur is deep."

"I thought I'd walk your way," Henry said, "for exercise."

Omensetter laughed. His teeth were bleached.

"Oh it wasn't for the rent, I knew you'd come with that. And how is the boy?"

"The boy is fine. We have him sleeping south to catch what sun there is."

"What have you named him, I haven't heard."

"Amos." Omensetter lingered on the word. "I've an uncle of that name who's rich." He chuckled.

"Lovely," Henry said. "Amos Omensetter. Yes. Lovely. And the girls?"

"The girls?"

"How are they?"

"Oh they are fine, and Lucy's fine. The dog is fine too. So am I."

"Good," said Henry. "Fine." The aspen's leaves, he saw, were yellow early. Omensetter held money in his hand. There was a spatter of red in the maples. There the money was and there the end was. It would settle in his hand and be goodbye. Omensetter would present his back and wave. The white oaks, still green, would swallow him, the sound already gone he walked so softly in the forest. Henry bent and picked an acorn up. If there were any other way. He filled his hand with acorns; flipped them idly. Omensetter's fist hid the money and Henry was grateful for that, but he saw he had trimmed his nails, and Henry felt terribly wronged. He tried to search Omensetter's face for a deeper sign but they seemed to be standing in a cloud of gnats. Henry waved his hand in front of his eyes. "I'm glad to hear that Amos does so well," he finally said. It would never do to ask if he would live there free.

"I want to see how far the turning's gone. Let's climb the hill, it isn't far." Omensetter held aside a pin oak's arms and Henry followed him.

A leaf would now and then detach itself and sail into the valley. Henry tried to speak but Omensetter led. The wind flowed around him as around a rock, and Henry didn't feel his voice was strong enough to salmon such a current. He watched a broad leaf break away and dip while the woods sank below them like a receding wave. They stopped for a moment on the bare hillside and Omensetter pointed to the flare his wife's wash made behind the trees.

"Orcutt says she shouldn't do such work," Omensetter shouted, "so I've taken to hanging it out myself." He lifted his shoulders expressively. "I can't get the girls to."

Then Henry realized that he could see through that massive green and changing tide as if to bottom.

It was since his sickness . . . Everything began with . . . since his sickness. Once to petrify and die had been his wish; simply to petrify had been his fear; but he had been a stone with eyes and seen as a stone sees: the world as the world is really, without the least prejudice of heart or artifice of mind, and he had come into such truth as only a stone can stand. He yearned to be hard and cold again and have no feeling, for since his sickness he'd been preyed upon by dreams, sleeping and waking, and by sudden rushes of unnaturally sharp, inhuman vision in which all things were dazzling, glorious, and terrifying. He saw then, he thought, as Omensetter saw, except for painful beauty. If there were just a way to frighten off the pain. The path was steep. His head was nearly level with Omensetter's marching feet — his softly polished shoes. Henry suddenly felt cruel. The fellow knew. He knew. The wind blew strongly and streams of tears protected his eyes.

Perhaps it was the height, perhaps the wind, perhaps he was catching cold after all, but Henry felt his sensations tilting. What he saw began to blur and merge, then once more focus brightly. He was about to bring something up from deep in himself. The frost was finicky, Omensetter said. Something like a mud fish with red malicious eyes, Henry thought, knuckling his brow. Apply counter-irritation: a prescription for life by Doctor Truxton Orcutt of the rotting teeth and juice-stained beard, who looked like the side of a house with a rusting eave. Now where was Omensetter's bright and simple world? Long, narrow, flat and black, a mud fish. And he'd never nailed it up, despite his promises to himself, despite his fear and his desire. He had bowed to the fellow, gone to his knees as he had to his father. Escaping to his room he had stumbled and fallen on the stairs, choking on his full mouth, spilling saliva down his chin to mingle with his tears. The leaves were minnowing. It had to be simple for such a simple fellow. Well listen old man, pain is the best known remedy for pain — keeps you alert. Just push with your thumb, gouge with your nail, gnaw with your teeth, kick with your feet, grind with your fist, strike with your knee. Some

went early, Omensetter said. Do you think they are playing at Adam and Eve? Three children and a dog? PARADISE BY RIVERSIDE. Perhaps by Springwater Picturesquely Overrun. Exorbitantly leased from Mr. Henry God, a lesser demon, with insufficient spunk to make a Christ. No, he seemed inhuman as a tree. The rest who visited were human. They made him sick inside his sickness. Mrs. Henry Pimber: untidy hair, dull eyes, fallen breasts and shoulders, grief at her guilt in his death, her every gesture like a pose within a tableau of desire; Mrs. Valiant Hatstat, rings spotted on her fingers, a small white scar like an unwiped white of egg lying in the corner of her mouth; Mrs. Rosa Knox, sofa-fleshed and fountain-spoken, with an intermittent titter that shook her breasts; Mrs. Gladys Chamlay, the scratched rod, nose like a jungle bird's, teeth like a beast's; Miss Samantha Tott, so tall she had to stoop in the sun she thought; and all those others, with their husbands or their brothers, invisible, behind them, making sounds to celebrate the death of poor old Henry Pimber; while Mr. Matthew Watson, neither praying, speaking, singing, crying, or exclaiming, uncomfortable in a corner, surreptitiously scratched a rash through his trousers. It'll be a while yet before they turn in earnest, Omensetter said. Not Adam but inhuman. That was why he loved him. Not for a life, God knew. Not for the beet root poultice. In the spin of his sensations, Henry caught the words. Who understood — to be inhuman? For he had seen humanity himself in everything. The good, the evil. The base and the heroic. The sublime and non-descript. Once he would have seen each tree boned humanly and branched with feeling like the black bile tree, the locust, despondent even at the summit of the highest summer. How nice it had always been to find his friends and enemies embarked in tame slow trunks, in this or that bent tree, their aspirations safely in high branches and their fires podded into quiet seed. There he could pat their bodies with his hands and carve his name and make up animal emotions for them no fruit could contradict. It had been easier for him to love great trees than people. Trees were honest. Their death showed.

"Hurry along. Let's go on. Come on Henry, I want to see."

Henry moved his feet unsteadily. Silver white were the spatters of the receding trees.

They were still silver in the spring. They were still new green

like the river. The sun came to them. The wind turned them. And a dark deep glossy green grew on by the head of summer. It was like the green he sometimes saw when the sun was right and the wind had died cover a stone that was lightly under water. There was hedge green and ivy, slick as slippery elm and cool as myrtle. There was slime green pale with yellow; some that was like moss or grass beneath a rock or the inside of a shuck of corn. There was every shade of green in the world. There was more than the rivers had, more than any meadow.

"Come along. Let's walk to the top."

The wind rushed over the brow of the hill, billowing Henry's coat and flattening Omensetter's hair. Behind them, in the valley, the leaves were quiet as if at the hilltop they had sponged the wind. Here the rush covered their ears. Omensetter shouted something. He ought to wait—that would be proper. Henry's toes curled in his shoes to catch the ground. He sidled awkwardly, his coat lashing his legs until his body seemed to sing like wire. All the warning clouds had fled.

"There's the notch."

Henry ledged after him. His coat ballooned. Somehow, in this mad place, he was losing everything. Omensetter vanished. The ground seemed to fall way. He hadn't known the sea had holes but how else did you drown? Then he saw Omensetter's bushy head and he dropped into the notch where the wind roared above them like Niagara Falls.

"This is one of my favorite places. There's always a wind here, if there's any."

Henry sat upon a rock and pulled his coat about him.

"You don't like it," Omensetter said.

"Oh no, it's fine."

They had to shout. Lovely view. Henry was terrified by the wind. His terrible daydream was coming true.

"I come often," Omensetter said. "A boat's out. I wonder whose?"

Henry shrugged and held himself. He thought of the wild beauty of the trees, his own affection for them, his romantic sentiments, his wretched illness with its lying clarity. He filled the nearby air with desperate steam. "Will you come here in the winter?"

Omensetter made an ugly face. "Oh no, too cold, I'd freeze. Don't you love the noise?"

But when the sun was in the west the trees would be long shadows on the snow. Chamlay's snake fence would lace his south fields. Every bush would be big. Every twig would be cast. Every post would show plain. The tracks of feet and wagons would be cut in the snow for anyone to see the pattern of their customary ways. An immense sadness filled him, although the sun in the notch was warming.

"Do you remember coming?" he shouted, pointing to the western hill.

"Oh . . . terrible . . . muddy . . . that slimy yellow stuff . . . rotten trip . . . afraid it would rain . . . never do it again."

". . . saving my life."

"What? . . . who's out?"

The wake was like a wisp of cloud.

"I said are you happy in Gilean," Henry yelled.

"Swell . . . Mat and all . . . say next year . . . some corn . . . pigs . . . may have to move I say may have to move though . . . damp . . . for the boy . . . too damp by the river you know . . . have to be careful Orcutt says . . . eh?"

His words were lost in the roar. The boat etched its cold line on the water. The river and the sky were the same cold blue. Abruptly Omensetter left the notch and started down.

Henry felt his world reverse and fought uselessly against it. Omensetter pointed to the shadow of a bird running on the hillside, and looking up Henry saw between them and the sun a broad-winged hawk like a leaf on the flooding air. The sailor of the wind is loose, he thought; my life is lost down this dead hill. I've gone sick, Brackett, in this low place, and there's no honest snow to cover the ground or cold to hold it firmly even, and the hill we came by is still a bitter yellow. He had raised his arms and now he let them fall. I'm dreadfully sick. A scientific fact. Quiet giggles cruelly shook him. And I've barely been alive. Now dead of low ground and dishonest weather. Would that look well on my stone? He stumbled. To fly off! Leap away! My stone . . . for sweet sakes, Hennie, you'll never have a stone. I shall be my own stone, my own tomb, my own dumb memorial—as in the past.

Hen-nie. Hen-nie. No one could put himself on purpose in this clay. I ought to be exposed upon a mountain where the birds can pick my body. Whoever's lived so little and so low as I have ought to spend his death up high. His mouth filled. Ridiculous words. Foolish patient, dreamer, lover — foolish, foolish fellow — poor, poor, stupid bastard. But I would have come with my arms before me like a present of flowers. He tried to spit and the wind lifted the saliva when it had scarcely left his mouth and drifted it like milkweed against his coat. From the hill when we came it seemed . . . it seemed (he nearly laughed aloud) . . . a place to be at home. The clouds had rose along their sides. They were swimming in the river and rain fell beyond us in the forest. The river like a bright hair ribbon . . . Gilean . . . a dream. Lalee. Naa-thing. Lalee.

"I need to sit somewhere."

"No. We'll go on down."

Stranger. Lucky fellow. Victim. Thief. And in my life I never knew another. The river disappeared beneath the trees.

They walked by the creek by the hornbeam tree; Omensetter, his hand in his greatcoat pocket where the rent was, his back indifferent as a wall; by elm and oak and maple, in the bowl that turned by the riverside, toward Henry Pimber's house where Henry followed, by the aspen, by the suede green sassafras, the beech. The silver morning grass was golden and resilient now. The slate was clean, the sandstones rich as brown sugar, and the red clay, softer after sunshine, moist, kept their feet to the slate, the sugar rocks, and the rough, resilient grass.

"I'm sitting down. I must." The log was stripped of bark and bleached. It lay by the creek like a prehistoric bone.

"The hill is steep. I should have remembered you've been sort of sick. How are you feeling now? good? . . . fine, that's good." He took money from his pocket. "I'm sure you understand, all right. We'll move when we can find a place. I want to be careful of that boy. You never can tell what may happen, isn't that right? There. You've been kind."

Henry stared but found no special meaning in his face. The money emptied to his hand.

"I must see how Lucy's doing." He swayed rhythmically a moment like a bear.

"Lucy will be doing fine."

"Orcutt said she was strengthening, but anyhow she must be watched," Omensetter said, his arm in a wave, "so must the boy. He's the only one we've got. Goodby." Limbs divided up his back. "So long."

Well . . . impossible to speak in a wind. What was in it, after all? Weather. Leaves. Pollen, he was told, from infinite plants. Dust too, of course. And the grains that carry cooking, smoke a pine tree to the nose. Seeds naturally. Flies. Bird song and the growl of bees. Himself. Pimber, Pimber, pity his poor fool self. Yesterday it was the long night rain that fell, misplaced, through morning. Tomorrow? Tomorrow might be calm.

Well . . . impossible to speak in a wind. And just as well. Why speak to my ghost? my bunch of bedclothes, rags, and wife? It had become tiresome to breathe.

Just the same I thought the way you walked through town, Henry whispered, barely aloud, carrying your back as easy and as careless as you would a towel, newly come from swimming always, barely dry you always seemed, you were a sign. Remember that first evening when you came? You were a stranger, bare to heaven really, and your soul dwelled in your tongue when you spoke to me, as if I were a friend and not a stranger, as if I were an ear of your own. You had mud beneath your arms. There was rose on the cloud sides, I remember, a rich, warm rose, and I watched the clouds sail till dark when I came home. It seemed to me that you were like those clouds, as natural and beautiful. You knew the secret — how to be. Henry cleared his throat. Now the thought of Omensetter's happiness and luck upset him like a shameful story. He was sorry, sorry for everything. He was sorry for the money and the well. He was sorry for Lucy. He was sorry for himself. Tears pooled in his eyes.

Just the same I thought you measured us by your inhuman measure like the trees, and we were busy ants in hills or well-hived bees whose love was to pursue the queen and bring on death. When you put my hands in bandages and beets I thought I understood. There was no shade between us ever but the shade I'd drawn. You were the same to human or inhuman eye. Henry slid from the log and hushed his whispering. He pushed at low shrubs until he couldn't see the sycamores. It was thick in the woods. He parted

the branches with his arms. Brackett Omensetter before he left had hid behind his face and made his back a wall. The man had been a miracle. He had, Henry spoke out angrily. A miracle. Not to be believed. And now he took defense against the world like everybody else. No miracle, a man, with a man's mask and a man's wall. Henry chuckled, unfastening the belt of his coat. The pooled tears ran. If Brackett Omensetter had ever had the secret of how to live, he hadn't known it. Now the difference was . . . he knew. Everyone at last had managed to tell him, and now like everybody else he was wondering what it was. Like everybody else. Henry wiped his eyes. Don't look for Henry here, my dear, he's gone. It should be tall. The white oak maybe. It had wide lobed leaves. Yet it was not an easy climb for a man who had been sick so recently. The sun would reach him early there and remain the day, the wind blow pleasantly. It ought to seem like leaping to the sea. He went by cherry and by black gum trees calling their names aloud. He was the Adam who remembered them. Tears nevertheless began again. How sorry for it all he felt. How sorry for Omensetter. How sorry for Henry.

THE NICKEL MISERY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER BROWN

BY IVAN GOLD

THE DAY that Carver Brown fell backwards from the freshly painted pinnacle of failure (setting even for him a new low) was the day before Thanksgiving Day: it dawned in frozen reds and blues, without portent. Between the sleep-smelling barracks and the temporary security of the mess hall he was called upon to face three minor crises, indisputable sources of discomfort, but nothing like harbingers because they had all happened to him before. In the crowded latrine his towel disappeared as he groped for it blind, soapy-eyed; back at his bunk his bootlaces had become tightly knotted, his blankets were wet, his mattress on the floor; as (having to repair the damage) the last man to appear at the reveille formation, he naturally attracted the attention of Corporal Cherry, who sliced off the open button of his field-jacket pocket with a straight razor and ordered him to replace (and button) it before entering the mess hall. Unstrung as Carver was by all three incidents he would not have said that they surprised him. They represented, at the five-and-one-half-week point, the sum and definition of his military experience, foreshadowed (on the day before Thanksgiving) nothing more than the status quo, another day of continual low-key persecution. Weeks later, when Carver's mother had keened away the sharper edges of her grief, she would say that on that day (and on the three days previous, too) at precisely one-forty in the afternoon she had felt pass through her back and spine a murderous unforgettable pain, as if a fat hand had brought her to a great giddy height and slammed her from it to the ground, but

Carver was possessed of no such (real or imagined) extrasensory power; received no indication on Wednesday or at any time previous that his luck had totally left him until that fractionary instant (and perhaps not even then) when there was nothing else to believe. The frigid bloody sun lofted into the cloud-streaked, quickening sky, the second platoon scattered before the first, third and fourth because Wednesday breakfast was their turn to queue up first outside the mess hall, and Carver Brown, who enjoyed food, stamped, shuffled and whined completely in character into the barracks to hunt in the chaos of his foot-locker tray for his sewing kit. He had made this early morning search a dozen times before.

The second platoon's athletic dash toward breakfast left still another in its wake, a noncompetitor (whom it would have outdistanced anyway). This was Roger Hines, the group's least agile man. At the command to fall out he took a long awkward step out of the first squad and continued toward the barracks, while the trainees jostled and raced behind him to the mess hall. Eating was not foremost in his mind. Copper-tinted and frail, he had a terrible brittle quality, his stooped, skinny form warning, *Touch me and break me*, and since the second day of the fourth week, when he tripped while double-timing and twisted his ankle, he existed in a state approaching grace, an accepted member of the so-called fifth platoon. This was the three-man fringe group allowed to straggle to the training areas at its own pace behind the company proper because of leg trouble — a man who had broken both a year ago on an obstacle course and spent most of the time since shuttling between various basic-training units and the post hospital; a man who contracted in the Army (and almost overcame) polio, eighteen months before, and claimed wistfully, in the twilight of his military career, to be awaiting early separation; and most recently Hines, his ankle not now seriously injured nor even when he fell, but its job done, italicizing what his body and bearing should have thundered from the start: that here, in this brittle, silent twenty-six-year-old, was nothing less than a great potential tragedy. Given an hour of crisis and not the slack time following the Korean truce; a sixteen-week infantry training regimen in place of this abbreviated, almost token program for men being groomed for noncombatant duty in the Signal Corps; given, in other words, the military context in which even gratuitous brutality commands an aura of necessity

—Hines might conceivably have had it. But he had been drafted at the right time, sent to the right place, come by the right injury, and his luck was going to hold.

Only Brown was in the barracks as Hines hobbled down the center aisle: Brown sitting on his bunk and sewing with a frantic clumsiness, still wearing the jacket, mumbling furious regional epithets about the character of Corporal Cherry that might have offended Hines at a less urgent time. Brown's presence alone was enough to disturb him, yet he knew he would be lucky to have to cope with no other distractions: the handful of trainees who might give up their early-breakfast privilege to fuss around their areas, or worse, use the latrine. His heart pounding under the field jacket, Hines reached the end of the center aisle without the barracks door slamming behind him, ducked with his rifle into the empty latrine, placed the weapon between the wall and his commode, and grabbed at the buckle of his pants. For roughly twenty seconds he defeated himself by ignoring the hard-won privacy to concentrate on the prospect of its imminent dissolution, but he heard no footsteps, and the sound of no door, and Carver's mumbling blended finally with the troop noises outside and he was on the point of achieving a kind of success when the saccharine whine broke into his ear:

"Man, why that mother always pick on me?"

He had not even heard him, neither stop his mumbling nor approach; he had built up for the first time in seven miserable weeks the kind of insulation he guessed he would have to have if he was ever going to learn to manage in what could at best be a delicate temporary privacy (for it was mad to expect him to cope with the rushed early morning shoulder-to-shoulder public performance, men lined up heckling, urging haste), and all the insulation had done was prevent him from composing himself for what he should have learned by now was the inevitable failure. Because someone always came in. He would have to wait until tonight, after lights out, and even then until the last diehard poker players and letter writers were gone from the latrine. He had waited painfully the night before, only to discover that Brown's tormentors were on the prowl: men deferring sleep until Brown crawled noisily beneath his blankets, then yanking him out, smothering his protests, dragging him to the shower room, administering the traditional G.I. shower. So last night too had been a failure. His insides convo-

luted strangely, dipped against the sudden shock of Brown's materialization. He felt sick with frustration, carrying a poisonous weight of a thousand pounds. He wished for absolutely nothing now but that he had heard the boy's approach.

"Man, why everybody always pick on me?" Brown repeated. He continued to work on the field jacket, his chin scraping his chest, the low, plump body half in and out of the commode room, his eyes crossed on the needle and thread. "There's three hundred boys in this company, they all screwups, why that Cherry and everybody always pick on me?"

Because you're built for guilt, you black fool, Roger thought. He couldn't move to wipe himself.

"Copperhaid, you smart," Carver went on. "Where you from anyhow, New York? You see how they wet my blanket this mornin' after somebody take my towel? How that Cherry pull out that razor before daylight and try to cut off my haid? Why they do that to me, Copperhaid? Why they mess with me instead of you and everybody else?"

"I have no idea," Roger said harshly, in the strident tones he had used all his life as a substitute for communication. Loud and with perfect diction in love, hate, and neutrality. It set off in the latrine the other's soft, accented whine. "And my name isn't Copperhead. It's Hines, Roger B."

Carver glanced behind him in response to the tone, although he was standing with his rump against the wall. "But everybody call you that," he protested. "Ever damn body."

"My name is Hines," Roger said loudly, "and that is the only name I answer to. Any other I've acquired since being in the Army because of the color of my skin I feel privileged to ignore." He would have retracted that; pinned insanely here to an unreal toilet seat by a dumb suffering son of the South, telling him things he could not even bring himself to write home about this nightmarish time, even to his wife.

Above the fat cheeks Carver's eyes grew wide. His mouth hung slack between laughter and surprise. Abruptly he discarded the suppliant's role for its opposite, and he said, "You's all confused," slipping the needle into his pocket and easing (across from Hines) onto a lidless commode. "You think us boys call you Copperhaid because you a nigras? Naw, man. You look like a damn snake,"

Carver said, guffawed suddenly and doubled over onto himself, the top of his head inches from Roger's knees. And straightened at once, with a look of joy. "It just the way your face sits, man, all tight across the bone like that. The way you don't seem to have no ears. All the blood gone out of your mouth. Nothin' to do with bein' a nigras, man, you just resembles a snake, that's all. You unnerstan'?" His interest was all directed toward Roger now; he had forgotten himself. "Some boy tells me you from New York, Copperhead. Where y'all live at, Hahlem?"

And still Hines could not rise; to leave or (better, but a dream) collect the power in one hundred thirty pounds and smash this fat-cheeked, persecuted, black-faced boy — this was the court fool, the butt, the door mat of the company, baiting him, Hines, one of the few who left him alone while hating him with a ferocity his tormentors could never muster — this was his *worst enemy* sitting there grinning fully clothed on a toilet seat touching-distance away, not even dimly aware that he flirted with what would never become disaster. It was almost too much to bear.

"Why . . . don't . . . you . . . get . . . some . . . breakfast," Hines said, and again Brown felt tempted to look over his shoulder to see who Copperhead was talking to.

"Plenty of time," Carver said. "If I can't be in there first, I just as quick be last. That way Copul Cherry maybe be out and I don't have so much worryin' to do. You live in that Hahlem, man?"

"My home is in Syracuse," Hines said.

"Where that at? A boy tell me you go to *college* up north. That right, man?"

"Yes!" Hines almost shouted. *Where I learned what I was born to fear and hate and hoped to God would never meet except where I had to every day in my own spoiled insides.*

Two trainees, through with breakfast, walked into the washroom. Despair made him brave, and he grabbed at the toilet paper. The situation could only grow worse, and he would rise.

Suddenly Carver began to whine once more, leaning toward him.

"Then you must be pretty smart, Copperhaid. Maybe you can say why everybody in this here company pick on Georgia Brown?"

"Because you like it and you want them to," Roger said, and stood jerkily and trembling and looked straight ahead at the bare wall over Carver's clipped round head and pulled up and buckled

his pants. He reached for his rifle and limped out hurriedly, not stopping to wash his hands. But it came anyway (as he had magically known it would), Brown's voice; reaching after and transfixing him, nailing him to his own cross a foot or two from freedom:

"Damn, Copperhaid, if you ain't just buttoned up the longest son-bitch I ever seen."

Only Cherry, Sergeant Braun, and Mentor, the mess sergeant, were at the cadre table when Brown sidled in at the door. Cherry sat at the end of the table, facing the entrance, Braun to his right. Mentor was opposite Cherry, his back to the door. Brown looked over warily, but the corporal's big-jawed face was down into his coffee mug. Brown took a step toward the table anyway, then changed his mind, reached for a tray and went over to the serving line. Sergeant Braun glanced at Cherry, but he didn't have to. Cherry waited until the second man had two strips of fatty bacon suspended over Carver's tray.

"Brown!"

The boy wheeled and the fried eggs leaped from his tray and skittered along the floor. "Aww!" Carver said.

The mess sergeant spun around on the bench. "Goddamn," he said. "Goddamn. And here we just got through workin' our tails to the bone G.I.in' the floor last night. Buddy, you're going to clean that up, along about now. And eat 'em if you want to. Because right there are your eggs for this mornin'. If this ain't the asskissinist bunch of trainees," he appealed to Braun. "Pick 'em up. Then go on back out and get a mop," he said to Brown.

"In a minute, sergeant," Cherry said. "I want him over here."

"Well, let him pick up the damn eggs before the captain or somebody comes in and breaks their neck," Mentor said.

"You heard him," Cherry said. But Carver was already on his knees, trying to coax the eggs (one yolk miraculously intact) with knife and fork back onto his tray, trying desperately not to compound the damage; succeeding, and only the moist outline and a figure eight of yellow remained on the concrete floor. He approached the cadre mess table with the tray held out in front of him, the edge of it pressing into his belly, and in five seconds his face ran the gamut, a dash, a pinch of everything. He was having trouble (an old problem) in forming an attitude.

Cherry looked up at him. "Now you see," he said gently. "If you had come right over to me like I told you to do at reveille and showed me your button and *then* went about getting your breakfast, you wouldn't have got all shook up and dropped your fried eggs and picked up any extra duty tonight. And I *know* you got better things to do with your time at night than fuss around the mess hall."

"Nobody say nothin' 'bout no extra duty, man," Carver said.

"Brown, when a man eats in the Army, it's a holy time. His mind and body has got to be free and completely at rest. There is positively no one messing with the troops at mealtime. That's how I can guarantee Sergeant Mentor don't mean for you to clean up his floor now, but he would like to see you back here around six o'clock tonight."

"He'll mop that crud up now," Mentor said. "If you send him back here tonight to help out the poor KP's, nobody's kickin'."

"You hear that, Brown? The sergeant has got you both ways. There's no pleasing some people. Suppose you take them dirty eggs out of my face and let me see that button now."

"Copul, I thought I'd clean my rifle tonight," Carver begged. "It's been a long while since I got that mother all stripped down and oiled and all. Y'all remember you had me in the mess hall ever day last week. It's sewed real good, copul," he said, as Cherry's hand reached ominously for his jacket pocket.

"Well, now, you don't have to be no expert sewer," Cherry said reasonably, lifting the flap and tugging at the button, once. "Just so long as she's nice and tight and always closed. You know me and my razor are getting pretty tired of cutting it off damn near every morning. You ever think of it that way?"

Carver had narrowed it now (a way to feel), the whine doing battle with no more than a tentative gaiety.

"Copul, you ain't got to cut anyhow. If you just go and *tell* Carver 'bout that button, you see how fast I get the mother closed. But the way everybody take on after me in barracks I just don't have time to worry 'bout it. You know what they done last night? They pull me out of baid and give me another G.I. shower, and they just give one to me day before yesterday. And when I get back to baid, don't you know I'm short-sheeted? And got to strip the son-bitch down and make it up in the dark? And this mornin'. . . ."

"All right, young soldier," Braun cut in. "You get that floor cleaned up and put something in your belly. And not stand here pissing and moaning all day. We march out in five minutes."

"Yes suh," Carver said, secure in (warmed by) the knowledge that the field first sergeant was teasing him. Didn't the man's wrist watch, resting face upward on the table, allow twenty minutes before the fall-in whistle blew? "Carver's goin' in half a second to fetch a mop. I just got to make sure that Copul Cherry know that if he sends me out to the kitchen tonight I ain't never goin' to get. . . ."

"*Move out!*" Braun yelled, half rising, and Carver moved out, whining, on his lips the corpse of a smile.

From the rear of the hall where he lingered over coffee, Tom Frazier watched what (from that remove) was little more than a pantomime, an interracial dumbshow set in motion by Cherry's sharp summons, and closed by Braun's overresonant dismissal, and highlighted by the short (soundless) arc the eggs described on the way to the floor. He had to have a theory if he was not going to be ashamed of the way this type of incident still had the power to amuse him, and over the weeks he had developed one, of a middling complexity, and just possibly true. It held that while Carver Brown was a scapegoat, a Christ-figure, and a clown, he was none of these things because he was a black man. His color had no bearing on the continuous round of double-pronged persecution (in which Frazier — while admitting his interest — played no part); he was simply the unfortunate heir to certain transcendent morbid qualities which made him a convenient receptacle for and a symbol of corporate guilt and suffering.

This was the theory (briefly put) that Frazier had to have. He required it because he was a militant egalitarian; he had become this only recently, against considerable odds, and he would not tolerate his slightest backsliding; not until (later: after the fall) it no longer had to go by that name.

It was not a bad theory, but it took (to Frazier's mind) some shoring up, because he noticed a great deal. He did not miss Brown's field-hand shuffle, his telltale wool, his ridiculous speech; he was even aware of the broad piece of irony staged at re-

veille two or three times a week by Corporal Cherry, when he brandished his outsized razor (which he had come by earlier in the cycle through confiscation from a since court-martialed, lithe, violent, altogether unhumorous Negro boy) and slashed at Brown's jacket: he noticed these things, and he was obliged to dispose of them. The razor was simply the form the persecution took in the hands of someone like Cherry; while no doubt a less subtle bigotry did play a part, as in the case of someone like Griever, a Tennessee mountaineer; but these were merely *effects*, existing (within the larger framework) alongside more congenial evidence: as for example Brown's frequent discomfort at the hands of trainees (and cadre too) who hailed from large cities in the North, or at the hands of the grinning Negro cook out in the kitchen with whom Brown jockeyed, at that moment, for custody of an idle mop, seeming to have almost gained it, to have teased it free, until the cook tired of the game and sent him on principle to fetch one from the mop rack outside — his blackness no more explained Brown's role in Charlie Company than the coloration of the limping Hines accounted for his being spared this kind of misery; it explained, in other words, nothing at all. So Tom Frazier lingered over coffee in the mess hall, and allowed himself to be mildly (but watchfully) amused.

He was a tall, athletic Southerner who had been expelled (as he would later, in part, tell Hines) from a fraternity for being apprehended (during Homecoming Week) hosting a Negress in the fraternity president's bedroom. The expulsion had turned his thinking into strange and unaccustomed channels, but he tracked these channels down tenaciously (with no backsliding) because he had that kind of mind. He was drafted not long after the incident, and while he professed a strong distaste for military service, he enjoyed having to cope with the challenges and the inconvenience of the six weeks up to here; and he had gained time (and an excellent set of situations) in which to test his fresh convictions. He wished only that he might have been assigned to a Northern camp, but, with luck, this too might come in time.

He was about to leave (Brown was busy mopping the floor, and only Mentor sat at the cadre table now) when Hines walked into the mess hall, removed the helmet liner from his flat, fuzzed top, and reached for a coffee cup. So Frazier put off leaving for a while and watched the snake-faced copper boy limp up the aisle. And

tried to draw him with his eyes. But Hines (moving deliberately, almost in slow motion, gentling his brittle, damaged bones) jerked his downcast eyes from table to table and sat down at the first empty one, half the distance between Frazier and the serving line. Frazier stared at the brown tapering fingers as they wormed a cigarette from the field-jacket pocket and trembled in the lighting it, watched Hines inhale with all of his body, suck the smoke deep into the translucency of him, visibly almost into his belly, and then lower his face to the oversized coffee mug and lock his fingers around its bulk; and he decided to try once again to make contact, although he had been rebuffed by the fellow in the six weeks — a half-dozen times. He picked up his helmet liner, his empty tray, and he covered the ground from table to table in long rapid strides.

In reaching across his chest for the cigarette, Hines glanced up and collided briefly with the wall of Frazier's eyes. He actually felt their impact; so he lowered his gaze to the flame's kind glare, slitted his eyes for the journey down to the black smoking drink, and told himself that Frazier was not looking at him, could not be, because he had no reason to; that if he was looking at him (if he had a reason), it would probably mean a confrontation, further distress, and he had already (by breakfast) filled his quota for the day. So when he sensed the form beside him, nothing remained but to gulp the scalding coffee (yet barely diminish it) and burn himself.

"Morning, Hines; mind if I join you?"

But he was on his feet, the corner of the table knifing between them, Frazier still bulking above him, like an adult over a child. "I . . . was . . . just . . . leaving," Hines said.

"Christ, man, you just came in. Why don't you sit tight and we'll chat for a while. Do you make it all right till noon with only black coffee for a breakfast?"

"I was just leaving," Hines said loudly. "I'm sorry."

"Nothing to be sorry about," Frazier said, but the boy was already on the move, a wounded quarry, scuttling down the aisle.

"That old Northern hospitality," Frazier said quietly, aloud. "Just like you read about. Why I believe we'll converse yet, you unsociable so and so," and followed Hines rapidly to the exit, caught and passed him wordlessly as somewhere in the half-light Braun's whistle blew shrilly, three long blasts, beginning the day.

It took anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five days for a company to learn to the last man of Corporal Cherry's unique means of supplementing his income, a group alertness determining the interval, *esprit de corps*, and the soundness of communication lines. He was circumspect, and taciturn, and there was nothing public about the money-making situation, although at first glance the opposite seemed true. The three-hundred-odd men lay in neat rows on their backs in the training area, each engrossed in the taut private world of the particular exercise, regarding fixedly (depending on their stamina, the angle's acuteness) toes, crotch or sky, and the nature of Cherry's activity in an exerciser's immediate vicinity was not (at first) carefully observed, even by the object of such attention. A man could not help but be aware (although L-shaped, concentrating) of the looming presence of a member of the cadre, and when Cherry bent to him he expected his position to be manually adjusted, or at least to be reprimanded; Cherry would occasionally accommodate, but more often he straightened in silence, leaving the trainee bewildered until the end of the exercise when the man stood, dusted himself off, and reached to the ground for his ID tag and keys — and nothing more. By the time even the most alert group discovered (to the last man) the most effective means of coping with the corporal (you left your change in the barracks, in your foot locker), he had added to a given month's pay check between twenty and thirty dollars.

The group of which Carver Brown was a member adhered to the norm in this respect, contributed twenty-seven dollars in small denominations over the first twelve working days and then abruptly wised up, much more rapidly than they should have, almost as if someone had hung a notice on the company bulletin board, *You will bring no change out onto the training field*. Although a cycle rarely yielded more than (even as much as) this one had, it had never done so quite so fast, and the complete, sudden stoppage left Cherry disgruntled and mystified. But the Army being what it was, he had no recourse but silence.

Cherry had taken a bullet in the left buttock in Korea, not far from his spine, had emerged from the well-intentioned but necessarily imperfect medical setup somewhere behind the lines with a slight permanent limp which rendered him unfit for further com-

bat duty, but did not otherwise inconvenience him, and he had been sent to fill the niche of shaper-of-men at the basic-training camp. The life suited him. Disappointments, like the present one, were rare, and more serious irritations rarer still. There had been the need to scrub down the barracks after the last cycle because the captain had been dissatisfied with the departed trainees' cleaning job, and had held the cadre responsible — but this was just. Cherry (a corporal with a combat record) had not relished the work — cleaning and mopping up after these men who were something even less than subordinates, a race apart — but he had not questioned its equity. It would teach the cadre not to make the same mistake next time. (He had not made the mistake at all — his building was the only one of the four which had passed inspection, but the captain ordered him in to work with the others, mentioning collective responsibility.) If these gold-bricking weak-kneed civilian people headed for the Signal Corps thought they had it made for these eight weeks as well as the time after, they were probably right — but they would not have it as made as they thought. He had seen to that through the two and one-half cycles up to here, and, after the recent mandatory housecleaning, the rest of the noncoms would probably see to it too. Cherry disliked none of the trainees so much as the idea of them, the knowledge of what they were going out into (and what not) and he treated them all with the same impartiality, except when a man begged for, demanded the only kind of attention he had to give, as had Brown. Even here, he enjoyed Brown, he had nothing personally against Brown. Cherry hated no man.

Yet that Wednesday morning he was to come close to it, striding through the ranks of L-shaped men, straightening buckling legs and barking commands, believing himself reconciled by now, the sixth week, to the empty pockets and the bare earth, but learning in an instant how wrong he was as somewhere behind him the coins jingled, clattered, and kept coming with jack-pot regularity; he spun to the sound and witnessed the end of it, the last few striking the clay surface and wobbling away from the rest, the stumpy boy turning his head on its cushion of interlaced figures and uttering a noise of anguish — Brown. A lame cat, he glided over a straining form as the instructor called, "Keep it going, five more reps now, 1-2-3-4," met Brown's shocked, pleading eye for only the time this

took, bent to scoop before the exercise ended and stopped, half-way down.

Pennies lay by Brown. Copper and silver ones, dull ones and shining; some rolling still but most piled neatly in the shadow of his thigh, a modest hill of money, pennies. Terrified and silent, Brown implored from his place on the ground, his fingers twitching beneath his head, his eyes wide, his body still. Cherry straightened empty-handed, and the flush crept upward from his jaw.

"Brown, you son of a bitch. . . ."

From the platform came the command to rise. Carver struggled to his feet with all the rest, but "Attention!" was too much to ask: his chin inched forward onto his chest, his eyes struggled to focus on the pile. Cherry kicked it then. He dug the boot of his good leg into the heart of the mound and sent the money flying as from the platform came the command, "Rest!" and Brown with a wild look started to sink to the ground.

"Stand up!" Cherry screamed.

"Copul, that my *money* there you. . . ."

"I said stand up! Does this here look like the PX? You see something out here you going to buy?"

"Copul that fifty cent I got till payday, why you kick it that way, man?"

"Don't 'man' me, buddy," Cherry said furiously; "I want to know if you think there's something humorous in bringing fifty pennies out here?" seeking the source of his anger, to explain it by unmasking malicious intent, although he knew the boy would not dare. "Every goddamn body else seems to know we leave our money in the barracks when we go out to train. You need an engraved invitation?"

"Copul, listen. Lemme tell you why. I was in the haid this mornin' talkin' to Copperhaid — y'all know who Copperhaid is, that skinny nigras boy — and when I come back out to my area, some of the boys has took off with my two locks and I can't even close up my uniforms and my foot locker neither, and all I could carry was my money, so I took it along out here. I know some of the boys talk in the barracks about some cadreman he take all your money if you lose it out here, but it wasn't safe no place else. I can't even get no toothpaste till payday, Copul Cherry."

"Somebody took your locks?"

"Sure did, copul," Carver said.

"If you'd had them lockers locked, that couldn't have happened now, could it?"

"Naw, suh. But I had to open them mothers for my sewin' kit."

"Well, now, that's pretty much toughtit. Brown, you didn't bring these lousy pennies out here just to piss me off, did you?"

"Naw, copul."

"I seem to be pissed off anyway, don't I? And I'm thinking if it gets any worse you'll be in the kitchen on extra detail every day until the end of the cycle, and never smell another weekend pass."

"Copul Cherry, excuse me but I ain't never been on pass yet. They always askin' me one of the genul orders 'fore they give one to me, and them genul orders too long for Carver to remember. Y'all had me on extra duty ever Saturday since basic began, anyway. If I can just get my hands on that fifty cent . . ."

"Brown, you listen to me. You're the lowest form of gold-bricking excuse for a soldier I have ever seen in all my time. If you bend for one — not fifty but one — of those goddamn coins you're going to be working a twenty-hour day from here to the end and everything up to now will seem like a Sunday picnic. You'll hope you were dead, you know what I mean? Now drop to the ground and do your pushups like the rest of these goldbricks and *remember what I said*," and kicked at a coin in reach and turned away in disgust; the fat, perspiring, active face seemed an inch away from tears. Or was it joy?

Pennies! He limped away furiously while Carver quivered in self-pity and indignation, thinking *If I don't have money I might as well be daid* (but knowing better than to scrabble behind Cherry's back or even snatch at the coin or two within reach). *Why that mother always got to pick on me.*

Sergeant-first-class William Divino, a thirty-year-old combat veteran, awoke in high spirits on the day before Thanksgiving and retained this feeling throughout the sluggish, workday morning, which did not necessarily imply the top-level functioning of his creative powers. In fact, the opposite might have been true: it took him, in high spirits, almost three hours to hammer out and smooth the doggerel he would probably have hammered out and smoothed,

feeling down at the mouth, in half that time, so that not until the class on booby traps and mines, the lesson in squad tactics, the chaplain's assault on pornography were all history did he feel ready to commit to public performance and scrutiny the verses inspired by the event he had witnessed (strolling a rank or two behind) some three hours before. The event itself might have damaged the good feeling (hastening thereby its own commemoration), but today it did not. While there was no gainsaying, there was also no speeding up the need for song. With the ready-made melodies frozen into perpetuity more through the demands of folklore than military need or desire, Sergeant Divino marched his third platoon homeward for the noon break, a cooperative, hungry bunch, suited at least as well for choral work as soldiering, responding heartily to his alternating bass and falsetto, the greatest quantity of sound issuing from the five or ten who had been eyewitnesses, the trainees who could boast that they were there:

"There's pennies all over the field,"

"YOU'RE RIGHT!"

"There's pennies all over the field,"

"YOU'RE RIGHT!"

"Pick 'em up,"

"ONE TWO!"

"Pi-ick 'em up,"

"THREE FOUR!"

"Kick 'em around,"

"ONE TWO THREE FOUR, THREE FOUR!"

Scowling magnificently, his craggy face guaranteeing mayhem, Divino stormed up and down the outside file. "Dress it up. Sound off like you own a pair. Castellani, get in step. *Change step, you dumb Wop*. Green, you're bouncin' . . . still bouncin', Green. . . . *Green, stop your bouncin'!*" "Can't help it, sarge, damn boots too tight," the tall boy replied, from the security of an inner marching column. Divino's breath poured onto him from across the man's face on the outer file: "No talkin' in ranks, you dumb bunny, just hold down the motherin' bouncin'," and he guffawed suddenly, no invitation to continued infraction but a measure of forgiveness, malice, good will, and cakewalked in step back to the center of the moving platoon. He was a thick and powerful man, a little under six feet tall, a missing left ring finger all that stood between him and a kind of physical perfection. He was also a skilled, butter-jointed clown.

"Lemme hear it, you bunch of Wacs."

"O Brown had a pocket of cash,"

"YOU'RE RIGHT!"

"O Brown had a pocket of cash,"

"YOU'RE RIGHT!"

"Pick it up,"

"ONE TWO!"

"Pi-ick it up,"

"THREE FOUR!"

"Kick it around,"

"ONE TWO THREE FOUR, THREE FOUR!"

Up front a few in the know strained for a look at Cherry, marching his group twenty yards ahead, but he gave no sign that he understood, or cared. Divino never looked. He had them bawl the verses all the way back to the company area, riding over the more conventional cadence-counting of the three other platoons, and silenced them as they swung into position, behind the orderly room.

The company marked time until the three stragglers, the fifth Platoon, limped in and into their respective parent groups, and Sergeant Braun appeared on the steps. He halted them, and gave them "At ease," regarded his realm for a moment, and smiled.

"Gentlemen. It's a real pleasure to see your bright shining faces. This morning, administrative duties on behalf of our absent first sergeant, laid up in the hospital, kept me from joining you in the field, where a field first sergeant is paid to be; they will also do so this afternoon. Yet you all know that in spirit I am out there with you, keeping an eye on each individual uncooperative ass. Behave accordingly. When you get out on that obstacle course this afternoon, do your finest work, because rumors exist to the effect that the battalion commander will be in the area. If he is not pleased with what he sees, he hops on the captain, who has no choice but to hop on me. This is what we know as the chain of command. In my turn I am forced to hop on the platoon sergeants, who then give the business to their platoons. So who gets it in the end? That's correct. You ream yourselves when you put out less than your best. This is the thought I would like to leave you with. Now I disremember which platoon is supposed to eat first Wednesday lunch, and I know I can't trust you people to remind me, so what we are going to do is stand at attention for a while, and the sharpest-looking platoon is going into that mess hall first, and so on down the line. Atennshut!"

A bristling, palpable silence gripped the field. Braun removed a clipper from his pocket and worked on his nails for a minute or so. Finally he looked up, and threw a quick glance at each platoon.

"You're all looking pretty good out there, you four platoons, with some individual exceptions, and I want you to look at least that good in this Saturday's parade. I would say from here that the em-

battled second platoon, under the guidance of Corporal Cherry, is our winner for today, followed by the first, fourth and third. Second, first, fourth and third. There is the order for the meal. At ease! I have a message here from the old man, which is to bring your smiling faces back around these steps at twenty to one, for a little talk on a subject dear to everyone's heart. Right after mail call. That is all I have for you. Atennnshut! First platoon, fall out . . ." With a flourish he cupped his hand behind his ear and cocked his head toward the second platoon. "Do I detect a voice or more raised in protest? A second platoon anxious to know why he winds up eating last, even though Sergeant Braun just told him he is eating first? The reason is that our friend George Washington Brown turned his ugly face for a sneak peek up here right after I got finished telling you how nice and soldierly you looked. While you were still supposed to be at attention. Now this goes by the name of idle curiosity. You all know you've got to have every man doing his best, because one bad apple spoils the bunch, as they say. Fourth platoon, fall out! Divino's platoon, the sloppiest as usual, you're eating third today through the grace of God, fall out! Second platoon, go!" and spun around, and walked back into the orderly room. The brief drama he set in motion below would not have surprised him.

"You son of a bitch," said Griever, a wide blond from Tennessee. "You cain't stand still fo' a minute can you. You got to move yo' ugly face. We'll drum up a little somethin' fo' you to move around about after lights out tonight."

"Man," Carver whined, "I never *moved*. That Sahgt Braun, he lyin' to you." His face worked violently under the impact of thought. "That chow the same five ten minutes later anyhow. What difference who eat first?" He was jostled by two more of the men he lived with, walking toward the mess hall. They regarded him with hate, threatened vengeance. They passed.

"Shee-it," Carver mumbled. He dug a boot heel into the earth. "Tonight still a long way off. I ain't even goin' to worry 'bout it."

When Captain Palmer appeared on the orderly-room steps promptly at twelve-forty to give an extemporaneous talk on social disease, he found he had a live audience, delighted to have put an unscheduled meal of C-rations behind it, bound by a collective

grumbling as well as anticipation for the holiday, susceptible to and even eager for communications from above. He was a lean twenty-six-year-old Virginian with sharp, delicate features and sun-colored hair, concealed now beneath the white helmet liner, set low over his eyes. He was a college-trained ROTC officer, but his origins were buried under three long years of military abrasion and blood: he owned an excellent war record, and he was no stranger to command. This would be the third company he had run through since being sent to Georgia, and while a basic-training unit brought its unique problems, required a shift in the delicate balance between cajoling and force with which one handled a combat outfit, he had succeeded in mastering these new techniques to his own satisfaction. "Do you men *like* basic training?" he began, in the thin, reedy voice he had trained to carry, and good-naturedly imputed the proper meaning to the good-natured, garbled, answering roar. "Is this the best damn outfit in the best damn camp in the United States?" The catechismic roar. "With the best damn cadre?" The roar. "And the best damn mess hall?" The roar changed in character, increased in volume, and Palmer raised his hands. "Any of you men want turkey tomorrow? And cranberry sauce? If you do, you've got to give Sergeant Mentor and his cooks a little breathing space. C-rations today only mean that you chow down that much better tomorrow. Does that make sense?" The crowd replied. "Let me hear you now — anybody out there who *likes* turkey and cranberry sauce?" The wild animal roar. To the rear of the crowd, almost detached from it, Roger Hines, laden with contempt, watched the mad mob display. He wished fervently that Palmer would get to the point, deliver whatever idiotic message he had summoned the company to hear, so that Hines could move off into the shade of the barracks and rest for the minutes remaining to the noon hour. He would not be able (even after Palmer dismissed them) to drag his perspiring, weary body into the barracks and plump down on his bed, as he longed to do. The barracks were off limits during the noon hour. The urge to inspect might grip the captain at any time during the course of an afternoon (went the rationale), and a barrack had always to retain its buffed, dusted symmetry. Of course (Hines thought bitterly) violations resulting from the full-scale invasion which took place shortly before the men marched out (if the heat held) to permit the replacing of field jack-

ets — the heel marks, the dirt, the beds nudged out of line — were easily distinguished by a U.S. Army captain from other, illicit untidiness; naturally (thought Hines) Palmer could identify outrages perpetrated during the legal assault and weighed, in his evaluation, only the dirt remaining . . . but he derived only minimum comfort from his irony. Pure malice, nothing else, accounted for the thousand stupid, niggling rules that contrived to make his life a misery. It staggered him to think of the brain power devoted to being asinine.

He watched Palmer's thin lips move soundlessly in the distance, and he wiped his forehead with his sleeve. It was hot . . . as brutally hot now as it had been cold in the predawn morning, and he had known that it would be — but the knowledge was never enough. To be jolted from sleep by the sudden flood of light and the CQ's bark; to be compelled to abandon the cultivated warmth beneath the two blankets in the double set of underwear and face the unheated barracks: these were shocks it required his entire being to withstand. While others shed the extra socks and the long-johns and hopped about for warmth, while others dressed rapidly and trapped what heat remained in their bodies, Hines, numb with cold, stepped stiff and dreamy into his fatigues, still clad in the winter (over summer) underwear, unable to deal efficiently, in the clasp of the frigid Georgia morning, with the fact of the sweaty Georgia noon, although he conceived of it; he simply was not able to calculate the suffering.

While his mind wandered thus within the soundproofed halls of his unhappiness, the captain's speech unfolded, and was well attended. The subject of gonorrhea, and of the five fresh cases reported in the company, was not without interest, and almost every one paid close attention to the commanding officer's exhortations. He made it plain that he was not happy with the fresh outbreak, not so much because it tarnished the company's record — which was worth taking into consideration — but because of the downright unwholesomeness of this disease. He did not believe it necessary, as he put it, to "get the clap in order to have a good time." There were pro-kits available in the orderly room, there was a clean, decent club or two in town, but best of all, for recreation, there was the post beer hall. He could restrict them all to the post until the end of the eight weeks, starting with the holiday tomorrow, but he

did not like to do that. He preferred to trust them. He had found that (once warned) his boys could be trusted. Besides, not only did they risk incurring his displeasure through disobedience, but “. . . Dorothy wouldn’t like it. She wouldn’t like it a little bit if I had to tell her that some more of my boys have gone into town and come back all fouled up, no good to the company, no good to themselves. She’s a pretty sensitive gal, and she’s upset by information like that. So think of Dorothy, and think of me, those of you who go into town. Have fun, but keep yourselves clean, and keep the record of Charlie Company the same way. Are there any questions?”

It was Frazier (for not many else would dare) who popped his large callused hand into the air and queried, in the broad accents and at the top of his voice: “Now just who in Jesus Christ’s name is Daaaathey, suh?” and earned the captain’s hard, bright-eyed stare; but the acne-ravaged face was the face of someone wanting desperately to know.

“Dorothy happens to be my wife, soldier. I thought I had mentioned that before. Are there any other questions?” But there were none. Sergeant Braun called the company to attention, and released them, to idle away what remained of the noon hour. The captain returned inside.

“His wife,” Frazier said meditatively, for the immediate few. The accent was nowhere apparent now. “I thought he meant the Dorothy I knew, that little old clapped-up Atlanta whore,” and moved off purposefully, knifing through the slowly dispersing crowd, in the wake of Roger Hines, who moved crablike toward sanctuary.

Hines limped around to the side of the barracks and lowered himself in its shadow. He slipped out of his field jacket, laid it across his knees, and dug his shoulder blades into the wall. He shut his eyes. At once he opened them, sensing the intruder, and his stomach dipped in fear and anger as Frazier dropped to his knees and swung into position beside him.

“Doesn’t he make your belly crawl?” Frazier said. “That patronizing so-and-so. ‘Dorothy wouldn’t like it. Daaathy wouldn’t like it.’ Who gives a shit what Dorothy likes? Of all the ways to appeal to a group of men to avoid the clap, that has to be the guaranteed worst. Dorothy! That paternal son of a bitch. Not only do we have Marse

lookin' after us poor old disease-prone field hands, but Missy, too. . . . Did you know that Palmer was from Virginia?"

"I had no idea," Roger said loudly.

"A son of the Southland," Frazier said, and produced a slow, confidential smile. "Like me. And Griever. With certain differences. . . . Who do you reckon has contracted the dread disease?"

"I have no idea," Roger said, and watched an image of himself rise lightly to its feet, stretch casually, and stride off sweat-free and unconcerned, into the sunlight; he himself did not move.

"No idea," Frazier echoed. "I don't either, but I can guess pretty well where they got it. The Mayfair. Julian's. The Star. You been to town yet, Hines?"

"No."

Frazier produced a pack of cigarettes and offered one to Hines, who shook his head. Frazier lit his own. They sat side by side, their backs pressed against the boards. Frazier's face was turned toward Hines, who stared out in front of him, at some point in the grass, his glasses dangling from his hand. The flat tan profile did look reptilian, Frazier thought, but helpless (less a copperhead than a garter snake, or a frog), and he felt a faint twinge of disgust, but he did not turn away. "You're not missing much. A desiccated, soldier-hating hicktown is all it is. I've been in only once myself. I usually get a lift into Atlanta over a weekend. There's a nice little town. It's a hundred-fifty-mile drive, but it's worth the trouble. Takes your mind off this military horseshit for a while. Have you . . ."

"I have never been to Atlanta either," Hines broke in. "I have never left the post. I don't intend to. Look, is there anything I can do for you? Is there something you want?"

"Is there anything you . . ." Frazier craned forward, and tried, without success, to meet Hines' eyes. "No, mister. There's nothing I can think of you can do for me. Nor is there a goddamn thing I want." He paused. "You know, you are about as unfriendly a cuss as I have ever met. You talk like a damn adding machine."

Still staring at nothing, Hines fell forward onto his knees, brought his uninjured leg forward, and prepared to rise.

Frazier's hand shot out and gripped his arm.

"No, look, Hines, I'm sorry I said that. It's the damn heat, makes a dumb rebel like me forget his manners. Maybe it affects you the

same way. Why don't you just sit tight, and let's chat a while."

With a dull, pained look, Hines brought his eyes to the hammy hand that clutched his biceps, the thumb and forefinger not quite meeting around the bunched green cloth of his sleeve. Frazier looked at it too. Slowly, elaborately, he removed his hand, but did not otherwise move. Hines remained on his knees, poised; his eyes were still glued to that spot on his upper arm. It takes as much energy right now to stay as to go, he thought; but he did not move. The apology hung new and sticky between them, as if to have insulted him and then recanted gave Frazier a hold he could have achieved no other way. He felt he had to remain now, although he dreaded the encounter not less—more. He replaced his glasses and propelled himself awkwardly backward. His helmet liner clunked on the tops of his frames, and his back banged into the wall.

"I noticed you noticing the ring!" Frazier said. He flashed the fingers of the offending hand, and for the first time Hines saw the school ring. *I noticed no ring*, he thought, but held his peace.

"Jefferson College. Best four years of my life. You know, they pulled me off KP here one afternoon to do some typing in the orderly room, and I got a look at the company records. A pre-signal group is supposed to be hand-picked for brains over brawn, but I counted five college graduates in the whole damn company. Three besides you and me. That's probably why I'm always busy sniffin' around for somebody to talk to. A whole company of crackers and Brooklyn boys is pretty rough on a snob like me. That's why I come messin' with you every once in a while, although it's pretty obvious you like your privacy."

Hines remained silent.

"The Army's not much of a place for privacy," Frazier went on. "Or any of the other comforts. My idea is that while I'm hooked, I'll give it all I've got for the two lousy years, but I feel only pity for the poor bastards that join up, whatever their reasons. Things can never be that bad. Take that Brown. I got a look at his record, too. He's an eighteen-year-old enlistee, lives about fifty miles from here. He probably joined so he could get the hell out of Georgia. Naturally he winds up down here, being shit all over, and with his kind of luck he'll pull a permanent assignment in the South. He's a rare bird, though. I figure it would be the same for him anywhere. What do you make of him?"

"What?"

"That Brown. What do you make of him?"

Hines made a quick-jerking movement with his shoulders, and continued to stare straight ahead. Frazier was seriously annoyed, but he masked it; he would have to force it a little now.

"I've got a theory about that boy. Not a theory, just a couple of ideas. I maintain he's got a special quality, something that begs to be kicked around, if you know what I mean, and the capacity to seem to enjoy it, after it happens. This makes him a pretty handy item to have around a basic-training camp. On the one hand he makes it easy for the cadre — he's a symbol of the company, and therefore a handy whipping boy. They lay into him whenever anything goes wrong, or even when nothing does, just to keep the company on its toes. On the other hand, the men ride him because they've got to ride somebody, and here's this fella who is askin' for it. So he's not only our lightning rod, he's also our punching bag, gettin' it from both ends. It's like he went around wearin' a sign sayin' 'Kick me.' The point is, it's not a racial thing. I've noticed Negroes hop on him as often as anybody else. Northerners too, like Braun and Cherry. I'm inclined to believe it's got nothing to do with his color at all. Do you go along with that?"

Still Hines did not speak. *You're built for guilt, you black fool*, he had thought to himself that morning, trapped on the toilet seat by the man he had maligned by labeling him his worst enemy (for his worst enemy was the man he had until today so carefully, instinctively avoided, the man who pinioned and tormented him with such elaborate civility now). *You're built for guilt, you black fool, because you are foolish, and black, and there is no deadlier combination*; and somewhere in here might lie a modicum of (intellectual) agreement with what Frazier had said, but he would never probe for it now. He shrugged a second time.

So Frazier marshaled his patience, and shifted his ground. His irritation was intense, but he was determined to elicit some response. To simply have Hines listening to him (once his goal) was no longer enough.

"Tell me, Hines, have you ever been South before?"

"No."

"Don't you have any curiosity about what it might be like in town?"

Hines turned to him for the first time. He met Frazier's blue, violent, impatient eyes, belying the mildness of his tone, and the sudden surge of anger melted to fear, and hardened again. *All right!* he thought. *If it is something he wants so bad.*

"I happen to be a Negro," Hines said loudly. "I have no curiosity about what it would be like to go into town."

Frazier smiled. "Well, now I know you're a Negro," he said. "Give me that much credit. I thought for that reason, as an *educated* Negro, you would want to go in and have a look around. In order to get the picture. I would take you in myself, if you could stand my company."

"What picture are you talking about?"

Frazier looked surprised. "What picture? The racial picture. Seeing firsthand what a man has to put up with in the South if he happens to be a black man. What you probably meet up with from time to time yourself. Don't tell me you haven't run into prejudice up North? Or in the Army?"

"Very little," Hines said. "Virtually none." He removed the liner, and drew his sleeve across the drops of sweat that stood out along the hairline. The long wool underwear itched unbearably. He looked at his watch, but it would not save him: ten minutes remained to the lunch hour. He decided to save himself. "I think I'm going to take a walk," Hines said.

"Wait!" Frazier said. "Let me just tell you something about myself. I see you're tense, and there's no need to be. Do you know what I was at college? Nothin' but a glad-handin', bird-brained fraternity boy, right into my senior year, and then one day the roof came down. I still couldn't tell you how or why it happened. There I was, boozin' and generally raisin' hell and not givin' a damn, and then there I was dropped from my fraternity for soundin' off against the bias clauses in the charter, damn near kicked out of school, losin' all my friends, and receivin' all kinds of strikin' notes in my mailbox. I just woke up knowin' one day, in spite of everythin' I'd ever been taught, that the Negro was as good as me, or would be, given half the chance, and if the sons of bitches I grew up with wanted to call me nigger lover, well frig 'em, I learned to take it as a compliment. I took sides in a fracas or two . . . hell, I won't bore you with the details. I was drafted soon after, and here I am, talkin' to you. Rather tryin' to. I can understand your reserva-

tions, but now you know. That all makes some difference, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Hines.

"You're from New York, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"That makes you the first Northern Negro I've ever had the opportunity to talk to. Although I've been doin' most of the talkin'. I've been thinkin' of settlin' in New York, after my discharge. Sever connections with the Dark Ages, in a manner of speakin'. Maybe get some kind of job workin' with race relations. Tell me a little somethin' about the life up there."

There has to be some basis, some fact or facts from which he takes off, thought Hines. *He cannot have created, wholly from malice, such a sickly, elaborated lie.*

"I see you're interested in the Negro Problem," Hines said.

"Why, hell, yes. Haven't I just been . . ."

"I don't happen to share your interest."

"What?"

"I said I don't happen to share your interest. I have no desire to listen to your theories on Brown, or on anything else. No doubt it's rare and admirable for you to take such an interest. It's also excellent that you feel the need to broaden your horizons, and get the Northern Negro's point of view. Well, I must tell you you've chosen badly. I went to school with a brilliant boy from Chicago, a Phi Beta Kappa as black as the night, with racial consciousness and theories up to here, one of which was that you were obliged to reclaim individual white Southerners where you found them, and that's the man you want a conversation with, and so far fate has been kind. I have no intention of going into town and be treated as something different from a human being, although I suspect you might enjoy seeing that. I have no desire to be considered representative of a so-called ethnic group I feel no allegiance for. I have no stomach for being patronized, as you're patronizing me now. You've made a mistake. Whatever it is you want, you'd do better to look someplace else."

Frazier knew that this was not the case. He had what he wanted right here.

"If every Negro was as sensitive as you are," he said reasonably, "y'all might just as well clear some timberland and run up a flag.

I'm not Uncle-Tommin' you, Hines, although you seem to have got that impression. I'm talkin' to you man to man. You can't help bein' what you are, you know that, but there's no need bein' ashamed of it, either. That's what the damn fight's about. Equal opportunity for all, regardless. When you say you're not interested in the Negro Problem, well that's a lot of shit. You people have to got to quit runnin' to extremes: bein' so damn conscious of your color that you think of nothin' else, or tryin' to pretend there's no difference between black and white at all. The point is the difference is there all right, but it shouldn't matter. Shit, Hines, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, and I sure as hell wasn't Uncle-Tommin' you as you seem to think. I was only interested in gettin' your slant on things."

"You have it," Roger said. He struggled to his feet and stared down at Frazier. "You have my slant. I want to be left alone. If there is one thing that interests me less than the Negro Problem, it's you. My only concern is how to cope with the Army. I don't need your help and I don't want your interest. So for the few weeks that are left, please find someone else to chase around and interview, and leave me alone."

While his usual pre-cut, strident delivery marked this speech, and his expression hardly changed, Hines' frail body trembled; for a second Frazier thought the boy might attack him, and he had to fight a smile. He could murder him, break him like a black, withered branch — and he would. But Hines made no such move. Frazier tipped the liner back onto his head and said, "Take care of your leg now, you wouldn't want it to get any worse than it already is," and Hines turned suddenly, wrenched himself around and started for the front of the barracks, limping more heavily than he needed to; for Frazier's benefit? he wondered bitterly; his own? and loathing them both as he stepped out into the bright, merciless sunlight.

Around the corner from this painful private conversation Divino frolicked before an eager, sizable audience, his own men mostly, with a few interested additions from other platoons. He clowned with a limber marionette fierceness, a puppet gone loose and unstrung with humor and jerked now by its own residual showmanship, spinning and buckling and roaring and miming through the complex comic routines it seemed he would have needed to rehearse

for, recruiting from the ranks indiscriminately as he required them the "volunteers," the sometimes willing and the more often wary (but the only risk that any ran was ridicule). On weekends he had his favorites (packing the Ford full with them Saturday noon and sparing them the inconvenience of the bus ride into town — foregoing the dollar a head other car-owning cadres charged, but screening applicants with a lot more care), but never in the field, and so in the field during a break, or during lunch hour, he could admit to his bias (rather glory in it) and lose nothing, but gain (if he had made this calculation) in stature and appeal. This was one of the few comic devices he repeated during the course of any cycle, the one he repeated now, cutting short a highly successful imitation of Sergeant Braun to lean suddenly backwards and propel his maimed left hand into the air and rotate it lethargically clockwise in a limp-wristed parody of the military "Assemble!" but there was no mockery in his face or tone:

"All Wops assemble on me! Assemble! Assemble! All Wops assemble!" in the voice of command they knew could dissolve at once into lisp or laugh or ladylike plea, as he charged up the barracks steps and waited at a height to be obeyed. Five men pushed to the front of the crowd to join the three already there. All of them had, at one time or another, been chauffeured by him into town, and six of them were members of his platoon.

"Now, you Wops," he began. ". . . We all Wops here?"

About half of the fifty men chorused jocular yeas and nays.

"All right. I want to know if you hear that dripping? That's my ass bleeding for you. This here is no place for Wops, especially if they have a little character. A Wop with character should be doing midnight pushups around the clock and collecting his twenty-six-a-week job insurance and not be out here soldiering. The Army was made for men, not Wops. But I want you all to get something straight. We all Wops here? I want you to know that a Wop gets a fair shake in Divino's platoon. Not that a Wop won't soldier, and not that a Wop won't sweat, but he gets taken care of. On the other hand, every ass which is not a Wop ass is in a sling. I'm going to jump it and I'm going to stomp it. It gets no favors and it probably gets persecuted. This is the message. Any questions? Any of you dumb Wop bunnies got any questions?"

Somebody did. Somebody spotted a shuffling, muttering Brown

(freshly risen from the grass where Griever had sprawled him) moving aimlessly toward the bleachers, about thirty yards out from Divino's group, and somebody said, "Ask Brown is he a Wop?" with an oily anticipation and Divino, unpredictable, complied. He brought his hands to his mouth and he megaphoned "*Brown!*"

The boy twisted to the sound his black mask of fear, and (when he saw from whom it came) indignation. He would not allow Divino to join (at this late date) the ranks of his persecutors, the one cadreman who had not, in six weeks, taken advantage of (or created) the opportunity to molest him. "Come on now, damn you mother, you messed your chance up long before," he whispered righteously; "it too late in the day for you to start to pick on me now." With sudden hopelessness, despairing of his internal logic the moment he had worked it out, as he had been forced that morning to waive the hope of marshaling an external one, to squeeze in the latrine from the boy he thought he could talk to (for Copperhead was not only bright, he was a Negro, too) only a worthless, a lying reply. Man, he *didn't* like to be always picked on (like Copperhead said), this was no help, this was nothing but a lie. Yet here he was about to be tripped up again (and from a brand-new source) minutes after lifting himself from the floor. All he wanted was to walk out to the bleachers to sit still until Braun's whistle blew, to be left by himself, and he didn't move or speak for fully five seconds after the sergeant's sharp command: "Brown, come double-timin' up here."

"If you don't mind, Sahgt Divina, I got myself enough trouble right now."

"Get your miserable tail on up here!"

So then at a shuffling trot, mouth working, face lowered, Brown moved up to and through the crowd which opened for him until he stood at the bottom step at a form of attention and Divino, hands on cartridge belt and legs spread wide, looked at him from above.

Divino's wild laugh burst into the new silence, and as suddenly was gone. Then the sergeant was not standing but sitting on the top step, leaning toward Brown, speaking conversationally so that the back rows had to crowd in and strain to hear:

"Carver, we got a little problem here that requires your expert help. You a Wop?"

"What you mean?"

"I mean are you a Wop," Divino said softly. "Like me and most

of these other gentlemen here. Are you a Wop is what I mean."

"Sahgt, I don't know," Carver whined. "I ain't never thought none about it."

"Well you start thinking now," Divino said gently.

"Theah ain't no nigger Wops," Griever said scornfully. He had ambled over to join the fun, and pushed up front, when Divino hailed Brown.

The sergeant stared for some seconds at the newcomer; then rose wearily from the top stair, removed his helmet liner, and placed it over his heart. His exaggerated, imperfect accent did more for the calculated effect than a flawless one could have. "Now, Tennessee, suppose yo keep yo cotton-pickin' opinions locked up inside yo cotton-pickin' face. Unless yo want yo dumb rebel ass down here on the floor givin' me twenty-five. *Why, goddammit, man, you all ain't even in my platoon!*" He leveled his left index finger at Griever, in this devastating revelation. Then he seemed to forget Griever, and stared at his fist. He opened it slowly, and held it out before his face, the hand so carefully concealed for almost six weeks that only three of the trainees ever knew, spread his fingers wide, and raised them over his head. With his right hand he replaced the helmet liner, and then rested the hand on the shoulder of Brown.

"Gentlemen, have you got any idea where Sergeant Divino's ring finger is? Anybody got any ideas?" If any man did, he held his peace. "I see I got to tell you. I left it in Korea, fighting the common enemy, where all the jackoffs go. Sergeant Braun has already notified you jackoffs where you go if you don't shape up. You go to Korea to fight the common enemy and protect democracy, like I say. I been there. I froze my ass in winter and I broiled it in the summer and I got out in one piece and I killed my share of gooks, but I left the live ones a souvenir. So hear this. The next jackoff who pops off about who is a Wop and who ain't, which jackoff ain't even in my platoon, is going to wish he was stationed right now in his underwear on the thirty-eighth parallel because that's how hot I intend to make it for him. Is that understood? Now Brown, one more time, are you a Wop?"

He was prepared now, having sniffed in Divino's attitude the possibility of reprieve, a situation different from the blind alleys he was accustomed to (with Cherry and the others) where the contact itself was as good as the persecution: he had researched, holding his

body rigid as he turned his head so as not to disturb Divino's hand on his shoulder, and he had inquired (with little hope), and had miraculously received a reply (while Divino enlarged on his missing digit) from the boy behind. So he thought he knew the issue now (a Wop was an "Eyetalian"), and he thought he had a chance.

"Sahgt," he said, "my folks was never Wops, but I b'lieve I might be a Wop at heart."

Divino swept off his orange liner and slammed it against the railing. Brown recoiled. "There ain't no Wops at heart except *Wops!*" Divino roared. "You understand that, mother? Now I get the impression you don't even know what a Wop is because I just heard you askin' that goofball behind. I'm going to inform you what makes a Wop, and then you're going to make up your mind. Either you are one or you ain't. And if you ain't . . ." the threat dissolved into high, demoniac laughter, in which the crowd joined. Divino's audience had doubled since he summoned Brown. He did not ignore it. He talked to be heard by the back rows now, although right at Brown:

"Now listen good. You're walkin' down a motherin' street at two o'-motherin'-clock in the morning. It's dark as a coal-miner's ass; you ain't never seen it this dark. You got no idea where you are, you can't get off this street, you don't know how you're gonna get home. It ain't quiet. All around you in the dark you hear strange noises, people whisperin' or yellin' in gook, except once in a while you can make out your name. Now are you scared, or ain't you?"

There was, he decided dolefully, no right reply. He was in as much trouble (contrary to his earlier impression) as if Cherry were doing the baiting, or Griever, or Braun. Maybe more. He couldn't understand Divino at all. It made as much sense as anything else to give a direct, honest reply.

"Man, you right I'm scared," he said. "I never liked it in the dark."

"Good!" Divino said. "Good, you're scared. Now listen. All at once a door opens on that dark street, and there is a nice warm piece of light where there wasn't none before. And back in there your shiverin', shakin' tail beholds a clean double bed with the covers turned back and a long cool rye and ginger and a wide-screen television set. And into the ee-luminated doorway blockin' your vision pops a big fat momma . . . You like a big fat momma, Brown?"

"Yes, sahgt," Brown said morosely. He wondered vaguely what color that big fat momma might be, and felt a new twinge of fear.

But Divino said, "Good. You're doing fine. Well, now, Momma knows when you're about to come pussyfootin' down that dark street because you're so scared you give off a stink, and she's lookin' out for you anyway. And she looks at you and she gives you the finger and the big hip and she says, 'Geohge Wash'ton Cahver Brown, honey, you my man. You's my tub-thumpin' happiness man. Listen to me, sugah. You all have wandered smack into Crud Alley, out of which hardly a man leaves alive because that is the way things are run heah. Y'all got a very slim chance to excape which all depends on how quick you decide to cut a chogy because th' impohtant thing is speed, but theah ain't no guarantees, even if you was to start leavin' ten minutes ago. Y'all in a peck o' trouble, honey, and I want you to stop in heah and try to fohget it for a while,' and she opens that housecoat, Brown, and damn if she is wearin' a motherin' thing in underwear. You with me up to here, you dumb bunny?"

"I understand, sahgt," Brown said.

"All right. So you got a problem. Because just then a red light flashes on down the road a piece, and it says 'This Way To The Exit' and it flashes off again. And it flashes on. Then it flashes off. Now that light wasn't there before, and maybe it will never be there again, and you know your chances of gettin' out are slim anyway because Fat Momma told you so. You're breathin' hard. You look at Fat Momma. She looks at you. You look at the sign. It blinks back at you. You're sweatin'. You're thinkin'. You got a big decision to make. All right, Brown, what's it gonna be?"

"How you mean, sahgt?"

"*What you mean how I mean?* You dumb bunny, you gonna give it to the lady like she is askin' or you gonna limber up your chicken legs and haul ass for the exit sign?"

He was dumb, but he was not that dumb. This time he read the signs. He knew well what Divino wanted him to say, but he still did not know what would happen to him if he said it — whether Divino was on his side or was his enemy, like the rest. But if the sergeant was out to get him, he reasoned, he would get him no matter what; oddly, this line of thought soothed him. He would tell the sergeant what the sergeant so obviously wanted to hear.

"Sahgt Divina, I guess I'd just as soon knock off that piece," and

recoiled again as Divino's hand shot toward him, but only to clap him on the shoulder just before Divino shouted at the crowd:

"Look at him! A true-blue Wop! A Wop's Wop. Right?" To the first few rows: "Graziano? Boccia? He's a Wop, ain't he? You a Wop, ain't you, Brown?"

"I guess so, sahgt."

"You *guess* so? You *guess* so! Get down there and give me ten, you mother." And when Brown dropped to the ground and laboriously began the pushups Divino straddled him, and just then caught sight of Cherry, exiting from the mess hall. So he leapt back up the stairway and stood looking down at Brown.

"Don't get up!" Divino roared. "You done your ten like a girl scout, but don't get up till we count the small change. Castelli, what's that fell out of that man's pocket?" while Cherry limped easily toward the orderly room.

"Nothin', sarge."

"Pennies! Did you say pennies? Brown, you jackoff, troublemaking sonofabitch, did you bring pennies out here onto the training field for me to bend for with my war wounds?" Divino whooped and then, like a man in battle or pain, changed it to a high staccato giggle while Carver trembled below him and Cherry stopped finally, turned his head, and winged the hate over the yards like a shaft of light coming from his eyes.

So Divino breathed it. He stopped the noisemaking, and the antics, and he breathed it, what he had elicited for the second, the fifth, or the thousandth time. It was all he wanted now or ever from the Cherrys, the knowledge he was limned in spades for them (Divino!) to know they knew that from the civilian crazy core of him he hated their souls. Needing no crisis, no confrontation, no mundane test of strength (because he knew they feared him, would always fear him, and needed one less); he needed only this periodic (and mutual) affirmation of their polarity: that on a barren bloody peninsula blasting gooks with no names he could muster no love for, or in a basic-training camp crapping on people he sweated with and created for eight weeks, Divino was Divino, Cherry was Cherry, and being in the Army changed nothing important, did not shape the guts of a man.

So once again he had it on record, where he had to have it, and he made no more noise. He spun the instant Cherry did, and he dis-

appeared into the barracks, leaving Brown stretched face to the ground and the disappointed crowd to wait for Braun's whistle, and he stalked into the latrine and he urinated, neatly and accurately, for he knew the captain planned to inspect the barracks that afternoon.

They screw their own, he thought. The image of the clean, delicate, wiry Captain Palmer burned through him now, and himself on hands and knees beside two corporals, three sergeants, and two other SFC's, scrubbing amidst a sea of suds at a wooden barrack floor while Palmer hovered briefly and scolded and warned it would happen again, oh, yes, men, with all the stripes and ribbons and purple hearts they had between them it would happen again if in future a group was allowed to move on with dust on the rifle racks and an inkspot on the floor—scrubbing the barracks floor and choking on it, a far more damaging indignity than being shot at even (because that was what you were for): they screw their own, he thought, and then he amended: that's only statistics they screw everybody and their own are around longer; this the link between the Palmers and the Cherrys and the Browns and his own general unsuitability. And suddenly after six crazy years he *knew* it, there in the latrine, that the battle was over; that it was not enough for him (and never was) for the Cherrys to know that he was there; that when Palmer called him down in a week's time for the token re-enlistment talk SFC Divino would say, *Captain, I'm twenty-eight years old, unskilled, I have nine fingers, and I'm bugging out back to my home town of Ohio to look for a job. Because I can deal with the Cherrys, and if not for the Cherrys maybe put up with the Palmers, but with the combination, no — there is no way to educate that pig except to kill him and there's no way to educate you, Captain, unless it's maybe to quit on you and make damn sure you know the reason why.*

"Screw everybody!" he yelled suddenly, startling the barracks orderly who lay on his bed, in a half doze, near the door. "Get off that rack and pull it tight," Divino shouted at him. "You ain't no privileged character. Don't you know the old man is gonna inspect shit out of this place this afternoon?"

"You bet, sarge," the boy said nervously, but to Divino's back and the slam of the door. From the orderly-room steps Braun's whistle tweeted shrilly, the platoons assembled, and here began the

unorthodox, ill-fated conclusion to the Wednesday afternoon.

Q7 loomed tall and complex over all of the low-slung, less ominous field, the whole brilliant in the afternoon sunlight under coats of fresh orange paint, uniformly applied. Signal Corps orange covered even the rapidly rotating legs (maintaining-one's-footing-on) set in Q7's foreshortened shadow, decorated the barrel-sized iron pipes through which the trainees would crawl, brightened all except the barbed wire strewn at random in the jump pit, and the hempen rope descending at a forty-five-degree angle from the top of Q7 and attached to an orange pole fifteen feet from the floor (this device providing the trainees with an option, having met the first half of Q7's challenge, on the means of returning to the ground). Repairs and refinements had accompanied the paint job, part of a major base-wide overhaul completed only that morning, and Captain Palmer's was the first unit called upon to cope with the course in all its refurbished glory.

Q7 naturally caused most trainee comment, a centrally located brobdingnagian ladder, rungs five feet apart, gaudy pinnacle lost in the black blinding sunlight; to some a bona fide obstacle, to others a challenge, a lark to the few. Frazier mocked it; he was a monkey in high places. Hines, who had been excused, limped belatedly on the scene behind the two other members of the fifth platoon, regarded it briefly, gave thanks once more for his injured ankle, lowered himself in the shade of an evergreen, and tried to think about time: basic training would be over in a week and a half (he only half believed it), he would be granted a leave, and he would go on home.

The eight-man cadre dispersed itself strategically over the width of the field, determined to maintain order and enforce honesty, but a form of chaos reigned. There were too many obstacles and there were too many men going through. It was possible for the enterprising lazy, by combining adroit footwork with a moment of faculty inattention, to move around and past an obstacle rather than over or through it, to join the disorderly queue which had just completed it, and move on to the next; or, in some cases, if an obstacle appeared particularly congenial, to double back on one's tracks and repeat it, for a good part of the training period. Thus it happened that Carver Brown, muttering but sharp-eyed, outforced Divino who was supposed to see that anyone who came his way took a running leap across the barbed-wire-strewn jump pit (Brown shuffled around it),

crawled four times at his leisure through the thirty-foot pipes (and was apprehended the fifth time by the sergeant-in-charge, who imagined — and was appropriately vexed — that he had caught Brown trying to sneak through for a second time), avoided scaling a fifteen-foot wall which had no handholds, and spent a considerable portion of his time coping with his balance on the rapidly rotating logs. But when carried inevitably to the base of Q7, he was too outraged to scheme. He would not even concede that it was something he wished to avoid, this nightmare of height and risk and ridiculous unfunctional labor; he would not even honor it by subterfuge, and head down he charged past its base (ignoring even its underside where grouped briefly those who had most recently completed the descent), moving blindly, laterally, back toward the beginning, toward the sidelines, toward rest, toward at the very worst scraping his belly on the earthbound ragged insides of the orange pipes once more. And he would have made it too — would have seen confirmed (what he had just learned from Divino) that he could abandon fear and caution and still escape punishment, just as a thousand times in the past six weeks he had mobilized caution and fear in usually vain efforts to avoid it; that there was no sense in and no way of predicting anything in the mothering Army — because Cherry gazed skyward at the moment Carver fled, upward past the creeping climbing succession of figures, fighting the glare with hands over helmet-liner and checking on Frazier's whoop of contempt and power as he straddled the topmost rung; looking up (Cherry) because the whoop could have meant that someone was in trouble up there, too. So it was not Cherry but Griever who shaped what was to come, one of many who saw and were amused by or else resented Brown's flight from what some of them feared and almost all were taxed by, it was Griever who yelled after him in the unmistakable accents of the land where both were born: "Brown, you buggin' out again? Trot yo' ass back here and up this thing!" And even that didn't stop him (because he knew it as the voice of Griever, who wielded a different kind of power), although it slowed him down, and Cherry caught him; Cherry sprung silently after him at a lightfooted limp and spun him around. The corporal didn't speak. He balled the back of the boy's sweat-drenched T-shirt in his fist and dragged and pushed him toward the waiting, growing crowd.

It was a reflex, not a plea: "Copul Cherry, naw!" in Q7's hot, odd-shaped shadow, touching distance from the bottom rung. Familiar ruddy fear replaced his indignation, flushing him clean, yet he did not really believe that he would have to climb the monstrous thing. Only his body knew: it quivered as never in the cool black mornings when the white man's razor flashed before his eyes in a cruel burlesque he was not even aware of, as it never did when he was faced by the venom of Griever, or the torments of Braun, as it had never reacted before. Elaborately Cherry released his hold on the sweatshirt and put Brown away from him like a slug, a thing picked crawling from his flesh, his mask of unfeigned disgust having its effect on the watchers, but completely lost on Brown.

"'Copul Cherry, naw!'" Cherry mimed fiercely. "Naw, copul, don't make my shiverin' shakin' bugout ream-my-buddy yellow tail go climbin' up that big old ladder. Let everybody else do it, not me. You are a cowardly, worthless, cheating sonofabitch, you hear me, Brown? You been under my skin ever since this cycle began, you're not fitten to be a soldier. If I have to take any more shit from you I'm gonna puke all over the field. Now move out. Climb. Hand over foot. Foot over hand. We'll all be down here rootin' for you. Climb."

"When I'm up high my haid spins, copul, I mean it now I never was no good at gettin' up onto high places evah since I was a baby I fell off a porch and opened my haid took twelve stitches. Copul Cherry, please I'll KP ever night for you and straighten up my area. . . . Shit, man, I can't climb that motherin' thing."

One man laughed. The rest were carried blankly, smoothly, on the music of the whine. Q7 stood bare, the last man having chosen the rope-pole route and shimmied to the ground. Behind Brown the crowd swelled, some men approaching for their second turn.

"Climb," Cherry said.

"Copul, if you listen. . . ."

"Climb," Cherry said. "I'm giving you a direct order. I've stopped my playing around. You know what a direct order is, you've learned that much. So you go ahead and climb."

"Copul, I'll never make it. . . ."

"Climb!" Cherry screamed. He sneered at Brown's recoil, but abruptly altered his tone. "Concentrate on what you're doin' at all times. Don't look up and don't look down. Keep your eyes glued

to the individual rung you are working on and move. Now move out! Move out, you chicken bastard! Move out!" And he was not even sure that Cherry had not taken a step toward him; he was ten feet off the ground reaching for the third orange block before he realized he had begun the ascent and scrambled up still another before his momentum went, and he looked below him at the upturned sundrenched faces, and started back down.

"Don't come down!" Cherry shouted. "Go on up! You're doin' fine. Climb, climb, climb, or I will cut your chicken heart out," Cherry singsonged, reaching into his pocket, "I just sharpened it this morning." And Brown did climb, clambered upward, to his own shock and surprise, driven now not by unchanneled fear but the image of Cherry's razor, catching the sunlight (although he had never seriously considered that the corporal would cut him before). He climbed, using to good advantage the vertical center strut, suddenly deliberate and almost cool, talking himself up a rung and then a rung more, watching his hands (but not his legs), hand, leg, hand until finally above him was one orange rung, and above that was space, and broad sunwashed sky. There was no longer anything to reach for; he had a moment of panic, shut his eyes tight, and it passed. "Man, this is the top," he said aloud. "You done come to the top. Don't look down, Brown," he sang to himself. "Start on down, Brown, down Brown, to the motherin' bottom," he sang, and from below came a rich gravel cry: "Atta boy, Wop," and it moved him, hands gripping the center strut which extended a yard past the topmost rung; he thought that Sahgt Divina, he not such a bad old mother, he don't give George Washington hardly ever no trouble at all, anxiety flicking at him suddenly as he saw the need for different techniques, a new approach, in the matter of coming down. *I got to kneel first*, it suddenly occurred to him and slowly he inched his hands along the top beam, leaving it reluctantly, with great care, for the center pole, began to bend his knees, the left one pressed firmly against the strut and then (like a sonbitchin' ghost, he thought, not wondering how Cherry, with only his hands, was able or needed to achieve the banshee megaphone effect when he had heard Divino's voice only seconds before sounding loud and clear): "Browwwwn. Yoooo don't come dowwwwn yet. Stay right there. Yoooo climb ooover the top and you come dowwwwn on the oooooother siiiide, the oooooother siiiide, Browwwwn. Ooover

the top. No goddamn cheeeating, you understand? Do it right now or your ass is miiine, you hear me Browwwwn?"

Please, you mother, Brown said to himself, and brought his right knee down flush with his left, his hands above his head and off to the left clutching at the center bar, a tableau of anguish, or prayer.

The echoic quality had gone. "Brown, I'm coming up. I'm on the way up and I'm going to toss you over the top if you don't straighten up and do it by yourself. Get up off your knees. Don't look down. I'm climbin' up to get you. You feel it shakin'? You feel the pole shakin', Brown?"

He thought he felt the pole shaking. Sweat dribbled off his forehead and ran into his eyes. "Naw!" he yelled. "Don't you come up! I'm standin' up!" He felt giddy with shouting, although he knew with a strange certainty that he would not fall. *Just hold tight, man*, he said to himself. *You keep your arms wrapped round that center pole nothing gonna happen*, and he blinked the sweat out of his eyes, pulled himself slowly erect, and once again over Q7's summit he faced the blue, naked sky.

"Oooover the top," came the ghostly voice from below; wasn't it closer now? Wasn't Cherry on the way up to make sure that he obeyed? "I *tole* you not to come up," Carver blubbered, and out of the sickening fear of Cherry behind him, and the expanse above (but Cherry behind him) he distilled enough crazy courage to work his hands once more above his head, to bear down on the flat smooth surface of the topmost bar, to pull and kick himself onto the summit — and he crouched there, clutching the yard-long extension of the center pole, all handholds below him, straddling the rung as Frazier had (in triumph) only moments before. From below came scattered cheers and ripples of applause. He heard them, and he knew what they were for: they were plaudits for Cherry, who even now scrambled up the ladder, five yards from him, a yard away, a foot away, and he sought the corporal, suddenly rigid with fear — down a rung, then two, then three, then drawn irresistibly in relief and terror he plunged his vision into the upturned faces, the pink and green (speckled with orange) sea. Now! He shut his eyes. Almost immediately he opened them again, peered out past the training field, past the road, over the tops of giant firs and onto another road, a half-mile distant, where a doll-sized unit marched in ragged

formation, rifles aslant, complete with its own limping stragglers, its own fifth platoon. *Oh, Lawd!* Carver said, *I didn't mean to be up this high*, and glued shut his eyes. He smacked his cheek into the grained wood, released his hold on the center strut, and gripped the surface with quivering forearms and thighs. He bruised the numb, fatty, uncomprehending flesh, ground the skin convulsively from the left side of his face, slavered, and suddenly relaxed, awaiting the conclusion of the dream.

Roger Hines did not move from his leafy shelter, the fir's concealing shade, but he craned forward and upward, caught his lower lip between his teeth, and amazed himself. *If he broke his foolish neck there would be much less unpleasantness then*, he thought, and rebuked himself at once, severely, and with a great deal of surprise. But it was easier then: *If he fell there would be lots less pressure then. Less stupidity, less viciousness; the two remaining weeks might see this place a country club*, and once again inflicted a reprimand, experienced a guiltless rush of surprise. *I shouldn't feel this way*, he thought, and stopped feeling any way; his eyes traveled the length of the ladder, from the pressing eager crowd upward to the motionless clutching Carver (the highest part of him his green protruding rump, a study in fear) and focused there.

"That boy is crucified up there," Frazier said aloud. "He is paying for the sins of Charlie Company." He looked around — was it possible that someone within earshot might be worthy of the conceit? — but no one had heard. What had happened to that stinking Hines, who would barely admit that he was alive? Was he taking all this in? It was he (with his bogus injury and phony detachment) who should be cringing and moaning at the top of the tower. Frazier searched the upturned faces of the crowd while Cherry bellowed through his paws, "Come on downwn, Browwwwn, all your friends waitin' on you down here," and Frazier gave it up finally and stared instead at the immobile animal sixty feet above the ground.

Divino performed a little jig, standing on the underside of the ladder, directly opposite Cherry, his hand gripping the bottom rung. He too stared into the sky. "You'd better go fetch him, corporal," Divino said. "It appears his belly is glued," and laughed a wild man's laugh which could have fooled no man who saw his eyes. Cherry ignored him. He backed off and shouted again, louder than before, and succeeded in disrupting Carver's dream.

"Come on down, you chicken bastard. I'm giving you three seconds to start coming down."

"Lawd, shut up that noisy sonbitch," Carver mumbled, from lips pressed out of shape against the grain.

"Maybe he's a cat," Divino suggested. "He can haul ass up a tree when he has to, but he don't have no notion how to come down. Now you got to call the fire department." The few who heard joined tentatively in his maniacal laughter.

The color went from Cherry's face. His eyes never left Brown as he unbuttoned his fatigue shirt and shucked out of it, took off his helmet liner. With a cat's grace, and its speed, he ascended Q7, embraced the supine Carver at the summit with consummate gentleness, talked lovingly into his ear, pried loose his hold, enveloped him with his presence, and brought him, guided him, carried him down. The crowd held its breath, and then cheered. On the ground again, disturbed, Carver sought to resume his jarred, garbled dream. Cherry brought him to his feet. He would have slapped him if he had to, but Brown's eyes were wide. The left side of his face was scraped almost raw.

"You damn right you ain't gonna faint now," Cherry said. "You son of a bitch you just committed a court-martial offense, you know that?"

"I'm tired," Carver mumbled.

"You been messin' around and messin' around and makin' this company look like hell right from the beginnin' and lousin' up my platoon in particular, but you really stepped into it just now, soldier, you disobeyed a direct order and I'm gonna see it gets you ten years."

Brown wet his chin and rolled his eyes, from an older, more potent fear.

"I'm puttin' it to you now. You're getting another chance to go up this here ladder and come back down the right way, under your own power. Not to be carried down by a man with a game leg. Up, and down, and you're off my shitlist, that fast. You don't have no choice, buddy, I'm orderin' you up one more time."

"I can't sleep," Brown said.

"Whaaat? You can't do what? Why you lowlife bugout yellow troublemaking ugly sneaky crawling son of a bitch. You want to

sleep? You want to sleep for the next twenty years in the stockade? I'm warning you. Climb!"

Called him everything but a nigger, Frazier thought. Even in that particular moment of stress. I have been right about it all the time.

What are they doing to him now, Hines wondered. He's down off it. I can't see a thing.

You got to kill them or quit on them, thought Divino. But you cannot kill them and quit on them. You cannot have it both ways.

Brown dreamed that Cherry shook him, and dragged him closer to the ladder, but he experienced no terror. Even when he began to climb he was not afraid, although he was surprised: you do any motherin' thing in a dream. Halfway up he misstepped and swayed forward through the bars, caught himself with a lazy drunken agility, twisted his body and (one at a time) his hands, and continued the ascent on the wrong, the other side. A few men cheered, with half a heart. Cherry fought for himself. "Now that was all right. You just saved yourself the trouble of crawlin' over the top. Hit the top and start comin' down," fighting the need to add "You hear me, Brown?" He lowered his head and this time caught Divino's beetling bright-eyed stare — raised his eyes in time to see Brown ignore instructions once again, and with a smooth, nonstop movement hoist himself onto Q7's top crossbar and once more straddle it, in reverse position this time, and lower his right cheek to the familiar comfort of the grain.

"He's gonna shave the other side now," Divino said. "He's shaping up. What a crazy Wop. Come on down, Wop," Divino called; but no one heard.

"All right," Cherry yelled. "Don't go to sleep up there one more time." He strove for volume only. "If I got to come up for you again. . . ." His voice gave out on the threat, and he hawked away the soreness. He sucked in his breath and held it, for the boy had begun to move: he raised himself slowly to his knees and lifted his arms and thought calmly, *If you reach for the pole, Carver, and hold tight nothin' gonna happen, even in a motherin' dream*, extended his arms off to the left where (on his first ascent) the center strut had been, closed his fingers, wrists, forearms on air, came lazily, lopsided to a crouch and toppled from the tower.

A few men yelled, "Look out!" but this was a warning, while he was still on the rise, groping for the pole, so that the descent was made in an eerie silence which he smashed himself on the four-foot orange hurdle that broke his back, caroming from here into the jump pit (the perils of which he had so recently avoided), slicing his contorted puffy face on the exposed barbed wire, and it was with the blood the noise began. Cherry did not contribute; was not among the first to race toward Brown's crumpled form; did just begin to move in that direction when he turned (realizing too late) to the hand gripping his shoulder and received two blows, a four-fingered fist at his temple and a whole one smashing with devastating effect into the base of his throat; while Frazier remained rooted for a moment, too: he stood on his toes and looked wildly around (while the object of his search was staggering from tree to tree on the perimeter, being sick on the move) and finally had to settle for an exasperated shout directed over the heads of the scampering heedless forms: *"Where is that anti-social Northern nigger? Is he still above it all now?"*

A TALE OF INHERITANCE

BY WILLIAM GOYEN

IT IS SAID — and true — that Wylie Prescott became the richest man in one part of Texas because of the accident of inheritance. But few people know the circumstances of his coming to power and wealth. That is the tale to be told.

One time were two sisters in a faraway county of Texas called Red River County, and they had little black beards. Their names were Cheyney and Maroney Lester — they were not twins but close to being that — and even when they were just young girls of about fourteen they had begun to grow a sprouting of black beard.

The way it began was that Cheyney's beard started to show first and then Maroney's. Cheyney was very distraught, and particularly as she felt she might fall into bad light with her sister Maroney, whom she worshiped. But Maroney came to her and said quietly, "Don't worry, dear sister Cheyney, this will make no difference between us — and besides, now I will tell you that for a long time I have noticed the same thing slowly happening to me." The two sisters embraced and vowed they would stay together for the rest of their lives. This bond was stronger than death, although death kept it, too, and a very beautiful one to see, endearing the Lester sisters to all Red River County.

Red River County was a wildwood in those days, neighbors far pieces apart, scattered along the wide red river and upon the red land. Rain would leave red puddles in the gullies, and red dust stained the water in stock tubs. It had a wildness to it, too, this

county, and where it rose to hilly places there were rocks and trees of hard wood, there where the water of the red river could not soften it. It was a beautiful wilderness and plain simple folks lived in it, and until the time of this tale, very few ever left the county and practically none that would never come back to it. This was all in about nineteen-fifteen.

Now there was a younger sister in the Lester family, ten years younger than Maroney and Cheyney; and her name was Princis Lester. Princis Lester grew along with her sisters and never spoke one word about the difference between her own aspect and theirs, though she took notice of it at an early age. She came to regard it as just the way they were, and there was no talk about it. But when she reached the self-regarding age of eighteen, and as she was slender and beautiful and chestnut-haired where her sisters' hair was of the coldest black, and they plump as two biscuits, Princis considered point-blank for the first time the plight that had befallen her sisters and thought death more desirable.

She said to herself, if this were to happen to me, I would just kill myself, looking at her face very carefully in the mirror. She drew farther apart from her sisters, though she had never been close to them, for Cheyney and Maroney seemed to hang apart in space from her, two little hemispheres joined by this isthmus of hair. Anyway, times were changing and Princis was taking her start in a new time. There was a new Commissary up a few miles on the riverbank, and there were gatherings of young and old here, giving the chance to farm people to dress up and look at each other and adding one more to the opportunities of Sunday church and family meetings up and down the valley.

Princis asked no questions of her sisters about what she considered a fatal infirmity — they might have been dwarfs or albinos from the way she regarded them. Still, they were sweet and gentle, laughing little creatures, her sisters; and in the autumn she listened to them laughing in the apple orchard in their nunlike felicity, and she watched out her window at them sitting in the apple trees like charming coons throwing down the fruit. What did they have that she didn't? she asked herself at the dresser. A beard, she answered herself directly. The beard seemed to make all the difference, even that of blessed happiness. But she liked them, they were so loving with her, their own young sister Princis, they never once

looked closely at her face to see if there was the slightest trace of beard, they never once mentioned it; and if she had not been their sister and that close kin to them, Princis might never have noticed their peculiarity after being with them for a little while, the way other more distant kinfolks seemed not to notice, coming once and a while on Sundays to visit in the afternoons. Eccentricities that take on price and preciousness in cities become humble matter of fact in country places among country folk.

She yearned to go away to a city, to get her a job or learn to be a Beauty Operator, or take a Course in something, as so many others were doing. But she waited. She finished high school and then her mother and father died within a year. She stayed on at home until she was twenty-five, yearning to run away. There was such a distance between her and her sisters, one she felt she could never bridge, never as long as she lived — she could not cross that bridge of hair. The neighbors and cousins were miles down the road and there were few callers besides them. She waited on. At night as she sat by the light of the glass lamp while her sisters played the xylophone in the parlor, she would scout her face very carefully in her hand mirror. Sometimes she fell into a kind of trance before the face in the mirror as though it put her into a sleep. Then the whole world lay only in the oval pool of her mirror.

One time at the supper table, Princis suddenly cried out to her sisters, "Stop staring at me!" and left the table. Maroney said to her, "Why Princis, our own beautiful little sister, we were not staring at you." But Princis put on her coat and went out the back door. It was drizzling and December. She walked in the orchard under the dripping fruitless trees. "This means I must run away," she told herself, "or I will end up by harming my two sisters who mean no harm to anyone."

What was that little cry she heard in the dark orchard, some animal or what? She walked softly toward the cry and saw two lovely burning lights. Those were its eyes. She went closer toward the lights, and it was a cat that leapt away from her. She pursued it. Up it went, scratching into a tree, where its eyes burned like some luminous fruit growing on the bare branches.

"Kitty!" she called. "If you are wet and cold, come to me. I am Princis Lester and I will do you no harm. We can be friends with each other, if you will come on down."

She waited and watched the lights swinging through the tree. Then the cat came slowly down to where she stood and brushed a greeting against her. She picked him up, and he let her, and she felt how friendly his wet fur was to her hand, as though she had known it always. But its coat felt torn — it had been hounded by some animal.

Walking back toward the house with the cat, she said to it, "You have been lost in the cold rain and darkness. You had lost your way because you were nobody's cat and now you are mine; and what will I call you?"

In the house, Princis saw that the cat was a big black congenial male with cotton eyes. She took off her new orange velveteen coat and wrapped him in it and took him into the parlor to show to her two sisters, and this would be an offering, too, to make up to them for what she had said at the supper table.

"Look here!" she said. "I have found a friend in the orchard."

Cheyney and Maroney ran delighted to Princis and the cat, whose head shone wet and black where it nestled in the orange velveteen. But the cat grumbled and spat at them and wanted to claw out to keep them away. Cheyney and Maroney drew back together, and Princis said, "He is just nervous," and took him into her room.

She sat down on her bed with the cat, dried him and brushed him with her hairbrush and said to him, "But what will I name you, because you are mine to keep." Some beautiful name, she thought. What beautiful names did she know? She could not think of any; but then suddenly a name breathed into her head, almost as though someone else were whispering her a name: Zamour! It was a lovely name she had seen on a poster nailed to a tree on the road and advertising a magician who would come to the Commissary with a carnival that she never saw.

And so Zamour became Princis' own. He either stayed in her room behind closed doors or walked with Princis in the orchard where they had met. He stayed away from Cheyney and Maroney, never taking to them, and they, in their kind way, did not press themselves upon him but let him go his ways under his own affections.

When Princis was thirty, she met at the Commissary a young Railroadman named Mr. Simpson. She spied upon him regularly at the Commissary from then on. As each got to know when the other

would come to buy supplies, each made a secret plan. She knew by his eyes that he would one day come to call on her, and she told Zamour about it, and that they would have to watch and wait for him to come. She and Zamour played a secret game together — “When Mr. Simpson Comes” — and they often sat together on the front porch swing to watch for him or in her bedroom at night, with only the little blue glass lamp burning, playing the game of waiting for him maybe to come while Princis looked at her face in the hand mirror.

Though she never invited Mr. Simpson, she knew he would come. The night he came sure enough to call, her sisters were playing the xylophone in the parlor, “Beautiful Ohio,” their favorite, over and over, such a music of gliding in a dream. Princis and Mr. Simpson sat in the hall on the hat-tree seat until the concert would be over and they could go into the parlor. But Cheyney and Maroney went on playing “Beautiful Ohio,” their favorite, over and over, a music to rock a canoe or swing a seat in a Ferris Wheel.

Mr. Simpson told Princis that he was an orphan from St. Louis, had no folks, and that he was being transferred to the city of Houston to work in the Railroad Yards there — he was a Switchman — and Princis told him without catching a breath a word that might be used to sing “Beautiful Ohio” with: *elope*: that she would like to elope with him, a beautiful word that loped into her mouth out of the music and lovely enough, too, to name a cat by if she had not first found the gift of the lovely word Zamour nailed to a tree.

Mr. Simpson was so thrilled by Princis’ generous offer that he took it, right there in the hall sitting on the seat of the hat tree that could have been the seat of a gondola they rocked in to the music whose glassy purlings sounded like a dripping and rippling of water to throb together upon and move a boat — toward all their future ahead. And so they eloped that very night, before the xylophone concert was ever over.

“Now we will have a chance to know each other,” Mr. Simpson told her, “and we will make our future of a long time together until we are very old, when we will have my pension. That is why it is good to be a railroad man.”

“And Zamour’s future, too,” Princis added. “For he will go with us.”

Princis pinned a note on the hat tree saying, “I have eloped to

Houston to get married and to make my future. Love, Princis."

Princis sent her sisters one postcard, showing a view of Houston looking north toward Red River County; and for many many years there was no other word exchanged between them.

This was the time when people from small towns and farms were migrating to bigger towns and small cities, the time of change in Texas. Princis and Mr. Simpson moved into a small frame house in a neighborhood on Hines Street in Houston. The block of houses, called the Neighborhood by those living there, was inhabited by migrants from little towns, and a few were even from Red River County. These people had changed their style of living and slid into the pattern of the city. But oddly enough — for one would have thought she would be the first to change — Princis Lester did not alter, but from the day she settled there went on living as if she were still in Red River County. Something in Red River County kept her.

She did not dress up and catch the bus to spend all day in town, picking through Kress's or having a Coke and sandwich in a department store Luncheonette, gazing at women to see if their purse and shoes matched; nor did she spend her afternoons in Vaudeville Matinées at the Prince Theatre that bubbled in dazzling lights even in the daytime; nor shop in Serve-Yourself Piggly Wigglys: she had a charge account at a little grocery store near by where the man whom she knew personally reached up to the top shelf with a clamping stick to get her a box of Quaker Oats. "Whenever I get homesick for Red River County," one of the neighbors said, "which is less and less — it's all so changed, not like it used to be there — I just go look in Mrs. Simpson's house and feel I've been home to Red River County right on Hines Street in Houston. Why does she harbor home and past?"

When Princis raised the windows in her little house, she put sticks there to hold them up until Mr. Simpson explained to her that windows held up by themselves in the city of Houston. She had her Singer Sewing Machine and she pumped the pedal to make her print dresses with country flowers on them; she made her own sunbonnets and wore them in the Neighborhood and even in the house or when she swung on the front porch, like her sisters. She put her crocheted counterpane on the bed and her doilies, turned under

her own hand, on the dresser and on the arms of the upholstered chairs to protect them.

Princis Lester's Houston behavior was an uncalculated change, among other changes, which at first surprised Mr. Simpson and then pained him literally to death. Princis kept herself from Mr. Simpson, and this took him by such surprise that he could not understand. She had shown him such a yielding eye at the Commissary and in the hall under the hat tree. Still, for a while it was an excitement and a challenge to such a man as he, and he pacified himself by thinking about all Princis could give him, all the newlybroken wilderness of future awaiting them both, when she was through her waiting. She turned, within the very first year, back toward her ancestry, and this in a world turning toward the other direction, so that such a new world could not support the change — it gave no ground to build upon, she might as well have made a house of mosquito netting; and against what weather could such a flimsy dwelling protect her? Princis became, in the Neighborhood, a curio left behind by a diminishing race, the last of the little country women, as if that race were finishing in her in a little house on a street in a city.

She seemed the last carrier of the bred-up aspects of a played-out species of large ears, small neat heads, faces no bigger than a coffee cup, dainty claws of hands with which to shell pea and bean, to cup a chick, to gather eggs one at a time and not to break any, to hang out small washings, dip one dipper of wellwater but not to draw a bucketful. When old Mrs. Graves first spied Princis Lester from her two-story boardinghouse across the street that once, when she and Mr. Graves first came to it from Benburnett County, was their home full of their seven children, she said to old Mr. Graves, sitting in his cane-back rocker in the one room they now lived in, "That new little woman in the Neighborhood will come to change and we will see her do it. Where are all the fine country women that once came to the Neighborhood, where have they all gone in the world? Something has changed them all away." The Graves house had been the grand house of the whole street which ran fifteen blocks between grammar school at one end and junior high at the other. On a corner, it claimed two lots, one a wide space of trees and with a small greenhouse, a chickenyard in the back. It had even had awnings. Now the cars of the boarders were parked under the trees and there

was no grass there, only a sort of soiled dirt from drippings of cars; some blown-out tires were lying around, and on Sundays some boarders washed their cars there. The greenhouse was a wreck of glass, roof caved in and the stalks of perished flowers still in it. In summer, though, trumpet vines covered the ruin. But in winter it was ugly to see. The servants' quarters were now rented to a woman from California who, at her age, was studying piano. Some nights it seemed she was trying to show off by playing the "Marche Slav" so loud for all the Neighborhood to hear.

Though Princis Lester stayed Red River County, Mr. Simpson took to ways of the Neighborhood and drew away from the house and from Princis. He was not a waiting man and he had waited beyond his capacity. Now it seemed to him that he had made a bad bargain at the Commissary in Red River County, and he used these words one night to tell Princis Lester so. He started bowling two nights a week with the Hines Street Team while the wives sat in the boxes at the Bowling Alley and had their beer and cigarettes, yelling when the Team made good strikes; or he went to baseball games and wrestling matches, or played dominoes in town somewhere; and he wanted Venetian Blinds. More and more Princis was alone, except for one other thing she brought from Red River County and that was her friend Zamour.

In the evenings Princis Lester, in her straight-down country dress falling like a sack down her body, would stand on the front porch or walk up and down the sidewalk on Hines Street in the twilight and call to Zamour to come in. "Zamour! Zamour!" she would call, in a sweet song, until Zamour, plain country cat, would come dallying in on his delicate high hind legs and too-short front ones, so that he seemed to be coming down a ladder to his destination. Sometimes Mr. Framer, one of the neighbors and a Policeman, when he was off duty sitting on his front porch cooling off with his bare feet cocked up on the banister, would mimic her and whistle back an insinuating whistle, until his wife, Mercel, came out of the house smoking her cigarette to tell him he ought to be ashamed. They were Rockport County people who drank their home-brew and fished on the jetties at Galveston on Sundays. They painted all the flowerpots red on their front porch and made a garden in their back yard with painted Roman Art bullfrogs standing on the rim of a fish pool, a goose, and a little elf sitting on a toadstool. Their garden

was of city mode, azaleas and camellias; but there was always one row of onions and one of bell peppers and a little greens.

Time passed and Princis withdrew more and more from the city and from the Neighborhood. She would not answer the knock of visiting ladies from the houses in the block, and one in particular, a Christian woman from the Neighborhood church who said she brought greetings from the Married Couple's Class, and had a bob with a permanent wave in it. No one saw Princis Lester any more, walking in her sunbonnet to the grocery store in the late afternoons with Zamour following her and the two of them having their conversation. She and Zamour kept indoors. Neighbors watched her forlorn-looking house through their windows, ferns on the porch burnt up from lack of water, newspapers and circulars in yellow drifts on the porch. They wondered if she was sick or not. The men on the Bowling Team knew that Mr. Simpson had moved to the Railroadmen's Boarding House in town and told their wives.

Then one afternoon there was suddenly the announcement of Zamour on the sidewalk, and sure enough at twilight the Neighborhood heard the call "Zamour! Zamour!"; and something was broken, like a long drought. They saw Princis walking up and down the sidewalk again. Her some sort of confinement was over, it was probably out of embarrassment or mourning at the flight of Mr. Simpson. Month after month, there followed this single daily appearance of Princis Lester at twilight, with only the calling of Zamour to let the Neighborhood know she was there, and her total silence and absence the rest of the time. "I think that's why she calls the cat so long and so sadly," one of the neighbor women said, "to let us know she is still there. For how else would we ever know, if it were not for the sign of the cat?" "And when she does come out, to call the cat," another said, "she looks white as a ghost. But that's because of the heavy powder she wears on her face, as if she'd fallen into the flour bin. Still, that's the old Red River County way: all caked powder, an inch thick, and no rouge."

One day Mr. Simpson fell very ill and was taken to the Southern Pacific Hospital. He lay there month after month, still a young man and sinking ever so slowly toward his death because of drinking. Princis Lester talked once to the doctors who came and made her let them in by crying out that it was a death message — and she

said at the door, "About who, my sisters?" The doctors told her that her husband must have been drinking all his life, for he had a cancer of the spleen from it. Did she know? they asked her. "No," she said to them. "I never knew Mr. Simpson that well."

Princis would not go to see Mr. Simpson at the hospital. She wrote a postcard to Red River County — but not to her sisters — and asked her cousin, a twenty-year-old boy named Wylie Prescott, to come and try to get him some kind of job in the city and stay in her house until Mr. Simpson could die. He came — he was from the Prescott branch of the family, kin some way to her, her mother's younger brother's son, she remembered; and he had very little to say, or Princis heard little of what he said. She did not even ask him about Red River County. He took the back bedroom to have for his, though he never seemed to be in it.

The young cousin began a secretive life, the city provided him this opportunity, and he got a job driving a large dusty truck which he parked on Hines Street in front of the house at night. He made his own secret life right away, or found it; and sometimes in the humid evenings, now, the Neighborhood would see Princis and Zamour sitting in the swing on the front porch and the cousin on the front steps playing his guitar. The Neighborhood, living their ways, would all be in their houses: the Catholics on the corner in theirs, the ones who had the big tomboy named Sis, in theirs; those in the rotting two-story Graves house in theirs — all the roomers in their hot lighted rooms, their cars parked in front of the house and their radios on at different stations — while the decrepit owners, Mr. and Mrs. Graves, sat pushed back into one room they lived in, with pictures of their seven children and their wives and children on the walls. The yards had been watered and the mosquitoes had come, suppers were over, the oleanders were fragrant, and there was the sound of accelerating night traffic on the close boulevards. Treefrogs were in the trees, for there usually had been no rain for three months, and their song was as if the dry leaves were sighing. Then Princis Lester would stroll up and down the sidewalk, ghostly in her thick face powder, arms folded as if it were chilly, her felt houseshoes on, with bonbons of fuzz on the toe, calling "Zamour! Zamour!" and there was the faint strumming of her cousin's guitar accompanying her little cat call.

It was her cousin, Wylie Prescott, who came in late one night and

saw something, after sitting in his truck in front of the house with Mercel Framer, with whom he had become good friends, playing poker and drinking beer with her to keep her company because Mr. Framer the Policeman had Night Duty. What the cousin saw was Princis Lester sitting in her bedroom by the low light of a little lamp, gazing like a statue into a mirror she held in her hand. Zamour was sitting on her shoulder watching and poised as if to catch a bird in the mirror. They did not even hear him come in. He watched Princis and Zamour, then shut the door very quietly and went on peeping through the crack. There she and Zamour sat, frozen in a spell of gazing. He went on to bed, thinking as long as they don't mess with my playparties I won't bother theirs.

When Mr. Simpson finally died, Wylie Prescott disappeared, so far as the Neighborhood could make out, for the truck was gone and no sign of him. Princis Lester took Zamour in out of the Neighborhood for good and they kept together in the little house very quietly, to wait for Mr. Simpson's Pension. Every morning at five-thirty the faint click of the alarm clock, turned off now but still set at the hour when Mr. Simpson used to get up to go to the Railroad Yards, was like a little ghost living on in the clock. "Mr. Simpson is still living in that big ticking clock," she told Zamour. "But when his Pension comes, we're going back to Red River County." She played a game with Zamour, to wait for the Pension. "When we go back to Red River County, what shall we take with us?" Princis named things first—she would take this, and she would take that; what would Zamour take? Zamour did not seem to want to take anything, only looked up at her through his cotton eyes, arched his back for her to put her fingers in his fur, and rubbed against her legs, shimmering up his tail. They had grown so close.

Most of the time Zamour had been so much like a person, a beautiful, loyal, and loving person, that Princis had forgotten that he was just a mortal cat, and she talked to him, did nice things for him, making plans for him in Red River County. "We'll plant a little garden and have us some okra in it, have our cow, and there'll be a shadetree for us, when Mr. Simpson's Pension comes and we go back to Red River County"; and she would run her fingers through his fur until Zamour would stretch himself long and electric under her caress. But when she would suddenly come upon him sprawled on

the bed, involved in his frank bestial sleep, mouth gaping and wild teeth bared in his cat snore, she realized, passing to another room, that Zamour was just a dumb beast and could play no game with her, speak no conversation. "Why go back to Red River County at all?" she asked herself despondently. "He is no one to be with." Then was when she was so very lonely that she wished to see her sisters. She wrote a little letter to them and said, "Do not be surprised but I am coming back to the house in Red River County when Mr. Simpson's Pension comes."

Her sisters were still there in the old house. There had been a few postcards exchanged during Mr. Simpson's illness and upon his death. What would they think when they saw her coming through the gate to the house, carrying Zamour and her suitcase? Or would she surprise them, come at night without their expecting her, walk up the road hearing their xylophone music which they had played together for years, hymns and sacred songs and some songs out of their girlhood, but most of all "Beautiful Ohio," their best one. People passing the old house on the hill at night would hear the sounds of the xylophone and used to say, "Those are the sweet bearded Lester Sisters." She would open the door, the music would stop, and Cheyney and Maroney would run to her in their delicate bracelets of beard that seemed to hang from the tips of their ears and loop round their chins, and take her back; and the three of them would live the rest of their lives together there in Red River County.

But no . . . she could not. They were of another tribe, it seemed to her, almost as if they were of another color and language; they had their own ways, their own world—she was an alien there. There would always be the question in her mind, did they love her or did they mock her. It would only mean another waiting with the face mirror, to see if it would come to her, and with them waiting and watching, too—she was sure they would wait and watch, for how could they help it? I am not like them, I am not like them, she told herself; they make me feel so lonely and unusual . . . and she could not go back to them. She and Zamour would find a little cottage of their own near her sisters and they would live happily there on the Pension. She would go to see her sisters once in a while, as the other kinfolks did, be nice with them, listen to their music,

accepting their difference, as she had when she was young. The Pension was what to wait for.

It was so long, her waiting. Now she and Zamour mostly sat in the upholstered chair in the living room facing the front door, waiting for the deliverer of the Pension. She made a nice place of waiting there. She and Zamour would not go out for anything, for fear of missing the person who would come. Every morning as soon as the click of the shut-off alarm sounded in Mr. Simpson's clock, she would rise in a nervous haste and rush to her waiting place and begin to wait. Sometimes she fell asleep in the chair, waiting, forgetting everything but the waiting, and wake in the morning still in the chair; and go on waiting there. The chair took her shape, as if it were her body, and Zamour, who sat in his place on the back of the chair as if on her shoulder, had grown so nervous that in his waiting he had clawed it to its stuffing of straw and clotted cotton. But Princis had not heard or seen this. In the Neighborhood there was a wedding once, and Mercel Framer was shot at by her husband early one morning when he came home off night duty to find her in a parked truck with a stranger in front of his house, causing some scandal and commotion on Hines Street; and a baby of the Catholic family in the corner house had died — the funeral was held in the house and the cars were parked as far as the front of Princis' house. But she went on waiting, bridelike, in her chair, and never had a single notion of birth or death or scandal beyond this sensual embrace of the chair and the longing for the knock on the door as if a bridegroom would be there to come in and take her so full of anxiety and saved rapture. If she had to get up from the chair for a moment, the chair seemed to carry on the waiting for her, though it clung to her and was loath to let her go, they were so locked together. But she would instruct Zamour to keep his place and take over until she got back — and she came back to the chair panting, as if in desire, to plug herself savagely into it and be fitted tightly, shuffling henlike in it until she settled in a satisfaction on this nest of waiting.

If there was a knock on the door she would grow rigid and whisper to Zamour, "That's Mr. Simpson's Pension, there they are"; and go to the door with a welcome ready — just to find a salesman of Real Silk Hosiery or Avon Products who, looking at her, stepped

back as if frightened and went away. When the delivery boy had brought the groceries the last time — how long past? — and told her she could not charge them any more because they did not believe at the store that the Pension would ever come, he stood away from her and stared at her. "They all must think I am crazy," she said to Zamour, and considered herself for a moment, then added, "because my face must show the secret waiting"; and went back to the chair.

Still the Pension would not come, and she waited and she waited. What it was or how much, she could not guess; but the Pension was what all Railroad people talked about and waited for, and when it came, one beautiful morning, everything would be all right. How it would come or who would bring it she was not sure, though she imagined some man from the Government looking like Mr. Simpson in the Commissary when he was so fresh and full, arriving on her porch calling her name and as she opened her front door handing to her, as tenderly as if it were some of Mr. Simpson's clothes, a package with the Pension in it.

One afternoon of the long time a rainstorm began, and a neighbor knocked on her door to try to tell her there would be a Gulf Hurricane in the night. When Princis spied the neighbor through the curtains she did not break her connection with the chair but sat firmly clasped by it and would not answer nor listen, seeing that it was no one bringing the Pension. But the neighbor knocked and knocked until Princis went to pull back the curtain and glare at the woman to say "Give me my Pension!" and Princis saw the woman draw back in some kind of astonishment and run away into the Neighborhood. "The Neighborhood is trying to keep the Pension from us," Princis told Zamour.

The rain fell harder, and in a time the rain began to fall here and there in the room. She did not care. But the rain began to fall upon her waiting place, upon her and upon Zamour and upon the good chair. "They are trying to flood us out, before the Pension comes," she said. She went to get the mosquito bar she had brought from Red River County and stretched it, between two chairs, over the upholstered chair, the way children make a play-tent; and over the mosquito bar she put a faded cherry-colored chenille bedspread she had made many years ago, just to make the tent-top safe. "This will preserve us from the Neighborhood," she told Zamour.

But where was Zamour? He had suddenly escaped the back of the

chair in a wet panic. She managed to catch him, brought him back and wrapped him in her old orange velveteen coat with only his wet head showing; and huddled in the chair under the tent, nursing Zamour, she went on waiting. The water was falling, everywhere now there was the dripping and streaming of water. She began to sing "Beautiful Ohio," but in the middle of the song she spied her favorite ice-blue glass lamp that she had had all these years, and she crawled out of the tent, leaving Zamour in his swathing, and rescued the lamp. It was so dark. Would the lamp yet burn? She plugged it in the socket near the tent, and yes, it still glimmered pale snowy light and that made her warm and glad. She brought it into the little tent. She took up "Beautiful Ohio" again, right where she had left off. The tent began to leak wine-colored water and she remembered that old sweet red water in the gullies of home when summer rains came. There is my home, she remembered.

The wind rose and the rain poured down; and after dark, her blue lamp miraculously burning, a portion of the roof over the living room where she and Zamour sat lifted and was gone. "What is the Neighborhood doing to destroy us?" she cried to Zamour. "They are tearing our house down and turning the Gulf of Mexico upon our heads." And she remembered the leering face at her window of the woman who had come with some threat and warning to her. "Still," she spoke firmly, "they cannot keep our Pension from us. We will wait here." Through her mind went the question, "What else is there of mine to save in under this tent from the destruction of the Neighborhood?" She thought of the cherished things she had possessed so long, to take back to Red River County in the game she had played with Zamour; the golden thimble — no, let it go; Maroney, her eldest sister, had mailed it to her parcel post as a wedding present. The alarm clock with Mr. Simpson getting up in the morning in it: no. The little setting hen of milkglass who sat on her savings of dimes and nickels and pennies — she would get her, for she had been one of the things in this house to wait with her, waiting so brightly on her milkglass nest full of savings. She found the glass setting hen and brought her back into the tent. The savings were dry, thanks to the way the little hen sat tight over the nest part.

Now the water was deep on the floor and the tent was sagging and dripping. Still the lamp burned. One other thing she suddenly

thought of and that was her face mirror that was willed to her by her grandmother, it was bronze and had green mold in the crevices, but on the back were the figures of two shy lovers under a tree. She had forgotten the mirror for so long during all this waiting for the Pension. She waded through Red River and found it, feeling it out in the darkness, where it had always been, in the dresser drawer, and waded back to the tent with it, her hand sliding at once into the intimacy on the handle which she had worn by clasping it so long. It felt as familiar as a part of her body. "If the Pension would come," she begged.

As she got to the tent with the mirror, Zamour turned suddenly fierce and leapt at her like a tiger. She could not catch him, screaming "Zamour! Zamour!" and Zamour bounded through the water into the darkness. She flounced through the waters of the darkness after him and she could hear him wailing and tearing at the wallpaper and knocking over the furniture. Had Zamour lost his mind, after all she had done to try to keep them both patient? No, cats hate water, she thought. I must pacify Zamour. She cornered him where he had run and leapt, on top of their tent, and in the pale light of the lamp beneath she saw Zamour's face wild and daring her to reach out to him. She reached out, murmuring "Zamour, Zamour, it is just water"; and as she put out her wet hands, the mirror clasped in one of them, Zamour attacked her and clawed her face, and fled. She cried out and began to weep, fell back onto the floor of water, holding up the mirror to keep from breaking it, and she lay there crying "O Lord," and buried her bruised face in her hands.

But what did she feel there on her wounded face, was it blood, was it water, and was it fur like the very coat of Zamour? She crawled on her hands and knees, the face mirror still in her hand, into the tent, muttering "Lord don't let the light of the little glass lamp go out"; and by the light of the lamp she held up the bronze mirror and saw in it her bearded face, and it bleeding, and the mirror cracked. Accompanying the watery sounds in her house she heard the low gurgling of Zamour somewhere in the dark drenched wilderness, like the sounds of a whimpering baby. She called out "Zamour! Zamour! do not cry; come back to our tent, I am Princis, remember me; I will do you no harm." But Zamour would not come, he only wailed and sobbed his forlorn watery

sounds of fear and alienation in the darkness. She humped under the ruined tent, in the sodden chair, and quietened. Then she whispered, "It is here, it has come, what is mine. Cheyney and Maroney, my two sisters of Red River County, I can come home to you now." And then the light of the lamp went out.

She sat in her chair under the tent in the wilderness. In her lost darkness, she tried to make up her life again like a bed disturbed by a restless sleep. What had led her to where she was, waiting for a Pension that would never come? She could not name herself any answers — she would salvage Zamour.

She crawled out of her tent on hands and knees and the tent of gauze and chenille fell upon her like a net. She crawled on, dragging the tent, and hunted through the swamp for Zamour, ever so quietly. She might have been the quietest beaver. She saw two gleams — those were his eyes. She oared herself closer, closer, ever so softly. What was this lost and trackless territory she crawled through, it was like a jungle slough, it was not any place she had ever known, neither sea nor land, but a border-shore of neither water nor earth, a shallows where two continents divided. Zamour, Zamour, her heart begged as she waggled closer to his burning eyes, but her lips could not utter his name. Zamour, Zamour, something deep in her whimpered and bleated, as if it were cold, as though retrieving Zamour he might warm her like a collar of fur.

On her knees, she reached out to the two low gloamings and were they coals of fire that burnt her to her quick, or were they the eyes of a rattlesnake whose fangs struck her at her face? and she bouldered back, then reared up, bearlike, scrawling and pawing with her hands and arms to claw this fiend away. She heard the crashing of objects Zamour collided with as he escaped her. Was this wildcat clawing the world down upon her? She heard him making a sound that was familiar to her, somewhere, it was a ripping to pieces; and then she heard the burst of glass and the sound of spilling coins; and she remembered her lost waiting place with the chair and the lamp and the setting hen. Which way was this place, to go back to? Where was the light, where was the face mirror? Over there, she thought, still on her haunches. No . . . over here. And then she knew they were forever lost. She had no way, no sign to go by.

She lifted up, feeling now so light, like a buoy, and rising from her knees she sank again, at rest, like stone into the shallows where

she was, another waiting place, as if she might from that moment on be a permanent mossy rock in these reefs and tides of what geography? She breathed. It was all over. She gave it all up then. The tent was hanging from her as though she would carry it forever like a coat of hair. "I give up the lamp and the mirror and Zamour, and even the Pension. I give up even the last thing," she said to herself; and, giving it all up to the last thing, she rested and settled, being this rock of nobody, no one she had ever known, renouncing all the definitions, the landmarks, the signs she had gone by to get to this nowhere in this dark bog of debris, on this lightless floor of the mud of her accepted eternity.

But what was that little cry? She found out two lights burning in the faraway distance. Some mercy ship is coming on some channel, she thought; what are those two mercy lights? It was an indestructible sign, lighting her memory back to an orchard on a frosty night and the sound of a cry and the glimmer of two eyes in a tree, and the meeting of two friends. *Zamour!* What was that watery music played out by the rain's hammering drops on broken glass but the tinkling little hammerstrikes of the xylophone . . . and oh her two sisters! She would survive in this dark world she sat in, she would start from there. For it was hers to begin with, to make her own. Something of her own had come to her and there was this to begin with: she was the sister of her two sisters, Cheyney and Maroney Lester and their own blood. If this darkness ever lifted and the waters ran away, if there was enough light to go by, she would try to find her sisters; and if there was no light she would go by darkness, rising out of these waters, and find her sisters wherever they were in this night waterworld and arrive there, steering herself home, to join them, crying, "See, I am your sister, Princis Lester." They would take her in, be so glad, there would be no more watching, no more waiting, *for they were sisters*. And they would live together in a home of warm felicity.

But Zamour uttered a kind of witch's cry again, from somewhere, somewhere, as if to call her to his claws again; and Princis Lester cried out in the darkness, "Zamour! I give up even you."

What time of night was it, because there was suddenly a bright light shining upon her and could there be a voice she heard saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light has come." Who, what had come for

her? There were voices and knockings at the front door. They called her name. Why could she not answer? Then they beat upon her door and called her name, "Mrs. Simpson! Mrs. Simpson! Let us in! Mrs. Simpson!"

"My name is Princis Lester," she murmured, "sister to my two sisters in Red River County."

Then, how many of them there were, she could not tell — she had not dreamt there were so many survivors in the world — but enough of them to pound and kick against her door, calling her name louder and louder. She would not answer a thing, she could not move, until a loud strong voice called,

"Mrs. Simpson! Let us in! *Your husband's Pension has come!*"

And at that call that echoed through the darkness, she began a lumbering crawl. Shaggy and dripping she buffaloeed through the water, slowly slowly, dragging the immense weight of herself and the ragged tent over what seemed sharp rocks and broken shell of a sea floor, across the gravel and shale of the widest shore, slowly slowly toward the light; and found the door. Rising to her knees with her last gasp of strength, she pawed open the door and ogled into the dimming light and the blurring faces of what shining company of bright humanity that looked first like the young face of Mr. Simpson in the Commissary, then like the faces, ringleted with hair, of her two sisters; and then there were no faces but it could be the guttering light of Zamour's eyes. "Hanh?" she murmured, with a look of mercy and salvation in her terrible tilted face; and this was how the Neighborhood caught her. Hanging from her as though it were the frazzled coat of a hounded animal was the rag of the chenille and mosquito-bar tent. A black shape shot through the door and into the Neighborhood, and it was Zamour.

That was some years ago; and for some years, quite a few, Princis Lester was in the Home, in the county seat of Red River County, resting. She could not tell anyone there what happened, or had no mind to — who knew which? She pinked her beard that wreathed her face like a ruff of Titian down and took deep pride in it, it was her one interest. She seemed to be dozing at peace in it, something safe in a nest. There was a purity about her that everyone admired. She was the cherished one of the Home, quietly gleeful, considerate of others, craving no favors but getting them in abundance. She had

a peculiarly enviable quality that made the others there long to be like her, even down to the beard. Some said, "What does Princis Lester have that the rest of us don't, to make her so . . ." — and they could not find a word to put to her to describe how she was; and another would answer, "A beard." One or two came to her at first, before they knew her, and said, "Listen here, Princis Lester . . ." and mentioned barbering or miracle creams that would burn a beard away; but in time they could not imagine Princis Lester any other way: take her beard away and she would no more have been Princis Lester of Red River County than any one of them if they had hung a false beard about their face and said "I am Princis Lester." It has, they said, to be in your heredity.

Princis' sisters came to see her regularly during their lifetime — it was a precious sight to see them chuckling and softly crooning together — and they would pat each other through long, smiling conversations. Then the time came for the two sisters to die, they were chosen almost at the same time, which seemed right — Cheyney first, then Maroney right after; and they lay buried side by side in Red River County. Oil was discovered on the land where the Lester house once stood, called, now, the Prescott Lease, and a very rich strike. Princis Lester still sat like a memorial hedge in the Home, up at Winona, very very old and still, but living her life on.

The Pension? It came, finally, after all the red tape of officials and signatures. Amounting to about twenty-eight dollars a month for a Switchman with not too many years' service, it waited for years in a file marked "Unclaimed" until Princis Lester might one day have her mind to claim it with, until it was clear that she would never find mind for the Pension; and so it waited to go to her nearest of kin, her cousin, Wylie Prescott, when she passed on, along with her few personal possessions.

Zamour lived out of doors in the Neighborhood for a long time, a renegade, like the black ghost of Princis Lester. He would not take up with anyone, but he would eat out of anybody's saucer or come up to be petted in a kind of suspicious, faithless way. He showed no trust in anyone, that was plain to see, considering all day long, as he seemed to, what we humans do to poor animal kind. Some of the neighbors, whenever they could lure him, tried to ask him what happened in that little house where he lived so long with Princis Lester, he seemed so close to speaking sometimes.

But of course he had no tongue to speak with, he was dumb beast and so there was no story to be had from him. His poor cat brain held the secret. One day the Neighborhood saw him walking away, tail in the air as if a balloon were tied to it — Princis Lester might have been beside him and speaking to him as they walked to the grocery store, for Zamour had that old dalliance in his gait. They saw him go on away, to somewhere; and he was never seen again in the Neighborhood.

Time passed, and with it Princis Lester, laid by her sisters to make three graves in Red River County. "Those are the graves of the bearded Lester Sisters," visitors to the cemetery remarked to each other. It was time for the next generation, and out of it rose the figure of Wylie Prescott to take his inheritance.

Wylie Prescott became a big figure of his generation in Texas, oil king and cotton king, cattle king and lumber king, and something important in the Legislature. He married a girl from a prominent old lumber family of Trinity County and added her inheritance to his. They had a daughter named Cleo and when she was sixteen took her to France and bought up a boatload of old, expensive antiques. While in France, Wylie Prescott went so hog-wild over French Châteaux that he bought a whole one and had it moved, piece by piece, from Normandy to Houston where it was put right back together again exactly as it had looked in some early century. It occupied a huge estate of many wooded acres, and Houston people drove by on Sundays and pointed at its towers topping the trees, telling each other that it was a French château from France. In it were all the French tapestries and coppers and cloisonnés, and among these were a once broken but now mended milkglass setting hen, a golden thimble, and a cracked hand mirror, left behind to Wylie Prescott, heir to all Zamour's and Princis' waiting, with this tale hidden in them for no one ever to know, and Wylie Prescott's secret.

Though Cleo Prescott never asked questions about these old-time Texas relics that were now quite sought after as antiques, she showed more of a fondness for them than for any of the valuable French antiques; and when she fondled them, Wylie Prescott would warn her never to look in a cracked mirror because, according to the superstition, it would bring a curse of bad luck to women.

And that is the tale of Princis Lester and Zamour and the inheritance that followed them.

THE SELF-MADE BRAIN SURGEON

BY MARK HARRIS

I ORDERED the illumination extinguished in the power pole, but on the following day the cruising Streetlight Bench replaced it. It was the Electrical Overhead who referred me to the Streetlight Bench, again I ordered the illumination extinguished, but the Fire Department took issue, one Inspector Mahaffey there, complaining that he required the light, it illuminated the alarm box on the corner. Not enough co-operation, too much efficiency, men are double-barreled. I arranged with the Streetlight Bench for an independent circuit, they installed it in the ground at the base of the pole. A buried brook ran underneath the sidewalk. It emptied in the reservoir. I could kick on the power pole with my foot when I went home, or off, however I desired. Several nights I went home very late, I was constantly afraid, the neighborhood was unfamiliar to me.

Complaints were initiated in the neighborhood when the light was observed extinguished, and I observed in the dark beside the pole. But where else could I have stood? From any other point I could not have obtained a full view.

It was not Mr. Kayzee who initiated complaint, for he is not a man frightened by much. He possessed no gun, while his door he long ago took down off the hinges, so at night when he quits he drops and lashes a tarp, that's all. The hinges are there, but no door hanging, yet he has never been broken or entered.

His own illumination is all interior, except his beer sign, which throws a little blue light on the sidewalk. Late at night, when the

fog blew in, it shone blue on the particles of the fog, and when the wind was right I could hear the foghorns. It was cold. Sometimes, when all was very quiet, I could hear his beer sign buzz, and yet I don't see how I could have heard it as far away as the power pole, but I thought I could. I became accustomed to the noises.

What you don't hear. Imagine if you could see as well as hear. I could hear the water running in the buried brook underneath my feet, babies crying and people arguing, dogs or cats barking or wailing, cars starting, doors slamming, brakes or honking, people whistling or singing, pianos or trumpets playing or blowing, bells ringing, radio or television, hammering or repairing. It is a great neighborhood for repairing, do it yourself. A man was repairing dents in bodies, one Lionel Hefley, age 44, residence 615 Twelfth, he was a moonlighter, he didn't really need the money but he needed the hammering. Nobody complained. Somebody shouted out a window one night: "Hefley, for Christ's sake, go to bed," then I heard the window slam, but it wasn't a peeve or beef, it wasn't anger, it is an understanding neighborhood, he needed the hammering. He was a patient of Mr. Kayzee's. Then little by little all around you the lights go out.

Sometimes he forgot to turn his beer sign off. He lives over his shop, when he switched his lights on upstairs he remembered his beer sign and came back down again. The mind is not such a mystery. If he had a patient he went in the back room. One night I went around the corner and down the alley, but I could not see in, nor was there entry or access there, although the Fire Department claimed that escapement was not impeded, one Inspector Farmer there. What was he thinking? It was a small window, and I scraped it, but it was painted brown and blue on the inside, triangles all crisscross, and I could not see in, nor hear in.

One Mrs. Marinda Marveaux was a patient at that time, a housewife, age 24, residence 55 San Pedro, I stood aside when she left, the rear of the Marveaux house faces the rear of Mr. Kayzee's premises. Complaint was initiated by one Armand Marveaux, her husband. Another patient was his alleged bookkeeper, one Miss Denise Willerts, age 18, residence 689 Twelfth, a student at the Washby Office Machines School & Sales. Another patient was one Lionel Hefley aforementioned.

Never was a job more lonely or depressing, it was too little to do

for the hours, standing and observing nothing happening. It is a quiet neighborhood, night after night, go out and buy a loaf of bread, half a dozen slices of meat for the pail tomorrow, two cans of beer for bedtime. Where is such a life leading? I was so depressed, talking out loud under the pole was next in store for me, babies cry, people die, one night there was a wake for one Mrs. Theresa McQuinn, age 78, deceased, residence 714 Twelfth. Mr. Kayzee closed early and attended the wake, babies cry, people die, get up, and go to work, everybody waiting for some piece of luck to carry them out of the neighborhood. In front of Mr. Kayzee's store they were always talking, the word I could hear was "Money." Yet when will such a piece of luck float by, and for who? You can try to promote your luck, you can bet the horses, fly to Reno for the weekend, hunt for your Lucky Dollar in the newspaper numbers, you can drink or take a pill, but half the ways of promoting your luck are illegal or harmful to your health, and the harder you promote it the thinner your lines become, you lose patience, your habits become irregular, you become irked and irritated. Finally you lose your job. Most of them figured it was luck enough to be working. You can borrow, you can gamble, but you can't really win, or even if you win you won't be satisfied, for winning once is only half of winning twice, in the end the regular life is best, come home, eat your dinner, put the kids to bed, read the papers, look at the television, go out and buy two cans of beer, come home and drink it, argue with the wife, turn out the lights, and go to sleep. It is that kind of a neighborhood, just the noises, not much.

He was born over the store. He was named Hopkins in honor of one Hopkins, deceased, who held the first mortgage on the store for his father. His father's name was full of *k*'s and *z*'s, such as Kzotszki, a foreign name, and when he was a young man he took out the *k*'s and *z*'s and called himself Kayzee. It was clever. I inquired of one M. J. Cavendish, age 84, retired, of 802 Twelfth (back): "What kind of a boy was Mr. Kayzee?"

He replied: "He was a studious boy, read books and ate fruit in the front of the store."

"Was he given to cutting up frogs and such?" I inquired. Information to this effect was divulged by Mr. Marveaux, complainant.

"Yes," replied Mr. Cavendish, "he was given to cutting up frogs

and such. The boys all caught frogs in the buried brook. It ran diagonal to what is now called Twelfth. The boys caught frogs and the Kzotszki boy cut them up with a knife. He ate fruit and read books and cut up frogs and such.”

In the old war he served in a medical detachment, 1917-1918, carrying, bandaging, and nursing. Following his military career he continued his career in his father's store to date, The Rite-By Market, 696 Twelfth.

Once every night I crossed the street and entered, purchasing a cigar. Cigarettes I kept lighting up and illuminating myself, maybe it was how I was observed, whereas a cigar could remain dead in my mouth for long periods of time and avoid illuminating myself. At that time I smoked three packages of cigarettes daily, I was on the verge of a nervous collapse. Once I cashed a small check, five dollars.

He always wore a white coat, and it was always clean, the sleeves turned back neatly one turn at the wrists. He wore a badge of blue and gold three inches in diameter, like an election button, it was a joke.

U. S. OFFICIAL

taxpayer

Every night he threw the coat in the hamper, the final action before turning out the lights, pinned the badge on the new coat, except on Thursday night he also set the hamper on the sidewalk prior to dropping and lashing the tarp. The liner of the hamper was removed on Friday morning by one Owen Segret, age 27, driver for the Pacific Linen Supply Company. The coats bore no stains or questionable matter other than ordinary, the pockets contained nothing informative, sometimes a coin or a register receipt. Segret returned the coins, if any, each following Friday when he replaced the new liner.

His books were kept by his alleged bookkeeper, one Miss Denise Willerts aforementioned. In addition to Miss Willerts he was assisted by his wife, one Dorothy, age 59, residence same. She was formerly a nurse at Letterman Army Hospital, 1951-1956, and elsewhere. Also by a delivery boy, one Warren Ponce, age 15, residence 685 Twelfth, the boy and the girl are relations. I can't describe how. Her mother and Ponce's father were formerly husband and

wife, their marriage terminated, the wives exchanged husbands, the husbands exchanged residences. It was the second exchange, since prior to the termination of their marriages Mr. and Mrs. Willerts were married to each other, and Mr. and Mrs. Ponce also. The Willerts girl and the Ponce boy now reside again with their natural parents. Eight other children are also issue, residing at 685 and 689, three born to Mrs. Ponce and living with same (two by Mr. Ponce, one by Mr. Willerts), while five were born to Mrs. Willerts (three by Mr. Willerts, two by Mr. Ponce), all eight now resident with their natural parents except August Willerts, age 14, resident in the Ponce residence, 685. Mr. Willerts was arraigned but never tried for alleged attempt to defraud, June 1946, in connection with a litigation involving multiple disability claims for alleged internal injuries suffered in a collision of two machines at the intersection of Junipero Serra and St. Francis Circle *de facto* unoccupied when alleged collision occurred. He was represented by one Carlos Minna, age 57, an attorney, residence 113 San Pedro, also attorney for Mr. Kayzee.

In addition he employs one Alvin (Monk) Kuhnle, Jr., age 38, a painter seasonally employed, residence 134 San Pedro, who paints items and prices and occasional interior surfaces, who painted the blue door leading to Mr. Kayzee's alleged storage room, who painted the window in blue and brown triangles within, and who paints the numerous signs or decorations such as MY MIND IS MADE UP. DON'T CONFUSE ME WITH FACTS OR DON'T CRITICIZE YOUR WIFE. LOOK WHO SHE MARRIED OR LOVE YOUR ENEMY. IT'LL DRIVE HIM CRAZY. These are the simple wisdom of ages. Kuhnle receives groceries and sundries in lieu of rates or wages. He was arrested in January 1953, for petty pilfer of the poorbox of the Church of Our Lady of Mercy, San Pedro at Thirteenth, charges were not preferred, he was represented by one Mr. Minna aforementioned and released in Mr. Kayzee's recognizance.

Except in the case of Kuhnle he pays standard rates or wages to Miss Willerts and Warren Ponce, withholding withholding taxes and Social Security deductions according to law, and \$599 to his wife *per annum*, whereby he claims her as an itemized business expenditure while also retaining her as a dependent exemption, it is legal.

Nothing was illegal. He possesses authorization to sell beer, wine,

liquor, or one or all and has no record of violation, possesses a Fire Sanitation permit to burn trash during daylight hours in an approved receptacle, permit to encumber pedestrian right-of-way with cardboard or light wood cartons or crates or other pending removal by scavenger service, and permit to maintain storage space at the rear of his establishment not to impede escapement. I ordered a Fire examination of the alleged storage space, one Inspector Farmholder there, but he failed to observe contents as I directed, reporting only "adequate escapement." Co-operation is difficult. Persons in high stations are often negligent or indifferent.

I made numerous inquiries of nonperishable salesmen or truckmen dealing in such goods as bottled or canned beverages, packaged cereals or desserts or cake mixings, inquiring: "Does your business with Mr. Kayzee differ in any way from your business with other grocers operating establishments similar in size or kind?" I gained helpful information from all, especially one Jack Schindler, age 48, a salesman-truckman employed by the Twin Peaks Bottling & Distributing Company.

"I am forced to call daily on Mr. Kayzee," he replied, "whereas I don't call daily on anybody else."

"How do you account for this?" I inquired.

"Because he'll stock shelves or refrigerator facilities," replied Mr. Schindler, "but he won't stock storage."

"Why won't he stock storage?" I inquired.

"Because he's not a progressive businessman," replied Mr. Schindler.

"Doesn't he do a good business?" I inquired. Then I stated: "He lives."

"You're asking a tricky-type question," replied Mr. Schindler. "He does a marginal business, he owns the building, he eats off his shelves, sure. Sure, he *lives*."

"But he has a storage room," I stated, and then inquired: "Why doesn't he use his storage room?"

"Because he performs brain surgery back there," replied Mr. Schindler. He laughed. Over the freezer was a sign painted by Kuhnle aforementioned in the old English style: BRAIN SURGERY PERFORMED ON PREMISES. ALL WORK GUARANTEED.

Everybody knew so. It was a joke in the neighborhood. Who cares? Anything goes, everything and anything is taken for granted,

it was no surprise I became depressed. Consider the neighborhood. It is a neighborhood of churches, including the Church of Our Lady of Mercy, San Pedro at Thirteenth, the largest Church in the Diocese, and yet you will hear a great deal of criticism of the Priests. All persons follow politics but do not trust the politicians. It is heavy with the residences of municipal workers, Police or Fire or other, and yet the Department is not respected. It is a Union district, and yet the leaders of labor are not respected. The taverns are full, illegal betting is freely solicited, graft and corruption are everywhere, violations exist, scores of residents draw unemployment but will not work though bodily able, it is a neighborhood joke. Scores of residents draw disability but are not sick, respectable physicians sign statements, and everybody knows but nobody tells. The outstanding industry of the area is minding your own business. Information is difficult to develop. I saw children smoking on the street, the adults turned their backs. I heard vile language from women and children. Do my own children do this, does the wife swear outside the house?

Whereas when I was a boy the future was arranged, my father allowed me my way, but never too much, I swore on the street but nobody heard me, I smoked under the stairway, we respected our elders, or if anybody heard me or saw me it was definitely by chance, I ran around a little, I fought a little, I pinched a stick of candy here or there, an article of fruit, I cut school, I window-peeped, I sneaked into ball parks and films, we all did. I wrote my name in the municipal cement. But we never doubted the future was arranged, and when the time came we settled down.

The more I stood there the more depressed I became. I wore dark clothes. I surveyed his premises from across the street beneath the power pole. For three nights I stood there late, while after the first few nights I became almost too depressed to remain, sometimes I kicked the power pole on and went home early, though I put in far short of the hours.

His knives depressed me, he was always slicing fruit, the blades reflected from his interior lighting. He sliced a little, he laid the knives down carefully for a customer, he wiped his hands on his coat, rang up the money, and picked up the knives again. Over the bread and pastries was a sign: ANYONE WHO REMAINS CALM IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS CONFUSION SIMPLY DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION.

TION, but he was calm, there was no confusion, his hands were steady. He sharpened his knives on a whetstone, and when he spoke he spoke slow, and he was calm, a deep thinker. MAKE SURE BRAIN IS ENGAGED BEFORE PUTTING MOUTH IN GEAR.

On the east wall is a large sign:

GOOD RULES FOR BUSINESS MEN

1. Don't worry; don't overbuy; don't go security.
2. Keep your vitality up; keep insured; keep sober; keep cool; keep your dignity.
3. Stick to chosen pursuits, but not to chosen methods.
4. Be content with small beginnings and develop them.
5. Be wary of dealing with unsuccessful men.
6. Be cautious, but when a bargain is made stick to it.
7. Keep down expenses, but don't be stingy.
8. Make friends, but not favorites.
9. Don't take new risks to retrieve old losses.
10. Stop a bad account at once.
11. Make plans ahead, but don't make them in cast iron.
12. Don't tell what you are going to do until you have done it.
13. Speak up, for dignity is more than dollars.

Mr. Kayzee discovered these rules in the front of his Daily Reminder, a black book I examined, showing Domestic and Foreign Postage Rates, Table of Days Between Two Dates, Actual Rate of Income, Distances and Mail Time Between Cities in the United States, Distances and Mail Time to Foreign Cities from San Francisco, Common Stains and How to Remove Them, Rates of Interest in All States, Actual Time in Use in the Largest Cities of the World when it is Noon in San Francisco, Rules for Computing Interest, Points of Constitutional Law, Weights and Measures, Explanation of Weather Bureau Flag Signals, Help in Case of Accident, Approximate Weight of Substances, Presidents of the United States, Nicknames and Flowers of the States, Supervisors of the City of San Francisco, Assemblymen of the State of California, Population of Principal Cities, Legal Holidays in Various States, and other necessary information.

Complaint was initiated by one Armand Marveaux aforementioned, age 33, a plasterer, residence 55 San Pedro. San Pedro is

only three blocks long, running parallel to Twelfth between Twelfth and Thirteenth, blocked at the east end by the reservoir, and at the west by the Nun Convent adjacent to the Church. The rear of the Marveaux house faces the rear of Mr. Kayzee's premises as aforementioned, she crossed her garden, jumped over a rock wall there, it was not high, afterward returning the same way and entering her own house by her own rear door. She was in love with Mr. Kayzee, afterward she loved her husband again, all was proper, it was only transference. San Pedro was known in former times as Vivian Lane, honoring a noted prostitute, one Vivian. Certain older residents of the neighborhood still refer to it as Vivian Lane, such as Mr. Cavendish aforementioned. They are incorrect. Complainant complained that his grocer, one Hopkins Kayzee, was engaged in alleged illegal or illicit relationships with his wife, one Marinda, in the storage room of the latter's premises and was performing alleged illegal or illicit brain surgery upon the head of same.

I was at that time assigned to Convention Protection. "We are the Nation's foremost Convention City, boasting splendid luxury hotels, unexcelled fine restaurants, a wide variety of sophisticated nocturnal amusements and daylight summit vistas, an average Summer temperature of 65 degrees (Fahrenheit), the world's largest International Airport, and a Cosmopolitan Atmosphere blended with a Frontier Tradition whose spirit encourages mature restraint as the better alternative to an unrealistic strict enforcement." It was the height of my depression.

I worked hotels and demonstration or display rooms with an old friend of mine, Archie Wilson. He also depressed me. Some months prior, coming home one night, he was attacked by hoodlums, his gun was stolen, he was beaten, his assailants were never apprehended. Requesting a change, I drew for a partner a young man of little experience, one Robert (Bob) McFee. Our work was limited to report. We were permitted to detain or arrest pick-pockets or confederates only, McFee took it in stride, everything and anything he took for granted, and yet a college man. Is this the respect my children will be taught in college? We reported or observed, but we could not take action, we could only survey. Whereas with an arrest here or an arrest there it could have been cleaned up entirely, Convention Protection done away with forever, but it wasn't done, the idea being allow it to be professional

but prevent it from being organized, let girls work, let card players work, only keep it in singles or pairs and off the telephones, keep pimps or heavy operations out. What were we doing? Do you wish your city to be no more than a protected operation? You will attract to it the dregs of civilization from Reno, Vegas, Denver, or other points.

When I awoke I inquired: "How can I face another day?"

The wife replied: "Let it pass, it's the summer season," while McFee took the same position, stating: "Let it pass, you're already an ulcer type, let it pass, let it pass."

"How can I see and not speak?" I inquired.

"Who would you speak to?" the wife inquired, then stating: "Limiting and containing is all you can do, accept it, it's the summer season," until I bottled it up inside me but could not release it, for who could be spoken to. She was right. "Speak up, for dignity is more than dollars." Men cannot always speak up. Men shoot themselves in the head in the locker room, it is a common occurrence.

Lieutenant Kline said a little rest would do me wonders, he gave me a week away, we left the children with my mother, the wife and I flew to Reno. We allotted one hundred dollars to the slots, we attended the nude shows, we slept in a hotel, we approached the end of our allotted money on several occasions, we hit, we were rich again, we laughed, but I wouldn't live there. When I returned Lieutenant Kline stated it was better for me to work slowly, relax a little, avoid tension, keep to myself. "What's this?" the Lieutenant inquired. He laughed. "Whose wife? The grocer's wife or complainant's wife? Investigate the back room, work slow, relax a little, avoid tension, is it a storage room, or what is it?"

Complainant is the father of three children, Marilyn, Lucinda, and Marilinda. I rang the bell, the children and the dog came running, laughing or barking, and Marveaux himself behind them, I stated my business. "Finally you came," stated Mr. Marveaux, walking out on the porch and chasing the children back inside. Then he himself went inside, coming out again wearing an orange leather jacket, and he zippered it up. In those days I never forgot anything, if a man wore a jacket and zippered it up it remained in my mind, my mind was a storage room of useless small facts, whereas I was out of touch with the big pattern of things. After he zippered up his

jacket we walked down San Pedro and around the corner. "What right has any man got," inquired Mr. Marveaux, "to be tampering with another man's wife's ways?"

"No right," I replied.

"When your wife goes to the grocery store," inquired Mr. Marveaux, "do you expect the grocer to be asking her all kinds of questions or making her all kinds of suggestions regarding her sexual activities with her husband?"

"Certainly not," I replied.

"A grocer is a grocer," stated Mr. Marveaux, "a grocery store is a grocery store." We crossed Twelfth and stood under the light of the power pole, his hair was cut in sideburns, he smoked Oasis cigarettes, and his jacket was illuminated, shining orange. It was called The Rite-By Market. "Don't you think a grocery store is a grocery store?" inquired Mr. Marveaux. "Is he permitted to call himself a brain surgeon?"

"We must know the facts," I stated, and then inquired: "Does he actually call himself a brain surgeon?"

"He performs brain surgery," replied Mr. Marveaux.

I inquired: "He actually cuts people's heads open with a knife?"

"He tampered with my wife's sexual attitudes," replied Mr. Marveaux.

"He cut open your wife's head with a *knife*?" I inquired.

"It was brain surgery," he stated. "He shifted around her brain, causing her to alter her image of herself by brain surgery."

"With a knife?" I inquired, then stated: "If it was a knife she would have come home bleeding. Answer me," then inquiring again: "A *knife*?"

"Go read the sign," he replied. "See the knives."

I crossed the street, he remained where he was. I entered the store, I bought a package of cigarettes. Over the freezer was the sign aforementioned: BRAIN SURGERY PERFORMED ON PREMISES. ALL WORK GUARANTEED, and in his hands a knife, he was slicing an apple. He put down the knife, he placed his apple on the scale, he gave me my cigarettes, rang my money, gave me change. Then he picked up the knife and the apple again. I went back across the street and leaned against the power pole again. "It's just a joke," I stated.

"It's no joke," he stated. "He made a regular sexual fiend out of

her. She was just an ordinary girl, after six years you don't suddenly develop along the lines of a sexual fiend unless somebody's been tampering with your attitudes. It was surgery."

"With a *knife*?" I inquired.

"Formerly it was now and then, take it or leave it, *comme ci, comme ça*, my background is French. She's also of French background."

"Answer me. Did she come home *bleeding*?"

"She came home a fiend. 'Where are you going?' It's seven o'clock. 'I'm going down to The Rite-By for a loaf of bread.' It's eight o'clock. It's nine o'clock. I'm all alone. Where is she? 'Where have you been?' 'I went down to The Rite-By for a loaf of bread.' 'Since when does it take two hours to buy a loaf of bread?' 'He was slicing it. It was unsliced bread.'"

"Slicing it with what?" I inquired.

"A knife."

"*Was she bleeding when she came home?*"

"It was brain surgery."

"You can't leave the house," I stated, "at seven o'clock and have brain surgery and walk in at nine and not be bleeding."

"She never walked in, she ran in, she leaped in my arms after six years, she loved me, I was tired, I'm a plasterer all day. She had a new image of herself. Formerly she was who she was, now she is Marinda Marveaux, French lady of the night. 'Where have you been?' 'I've been in the back of the store with Mr. Kayzee.' 'Doing what?' 'Receiving brain surgery.' Everybody in the neighborhood is having brain surgery in the back of Mr. Kayzee. Ask around. Read the sign."

"Mr. Marveaux," I stated, "brain surgery is a job done by medicine men of long experience and training in many colleges, and you bleed. You lie around unconscious for many hours afterward, and they send you a big bill." Then I inquired: "Does Mr. Kayzee send you a bill?"

"Only for groceries," he replied. He leaned against the power pole, thinking of Mr. Kayzee. "He's a very fair dealer. I like him. He has done wonders for the wife."

"Then why did you issue complaint?" I inquired.

"I didn't issue complaint," he replied.

"You called the police," I stated.

"Well, it's all right now," he stated. Again he leaned, thinking, and soon he stated further: "I withdraw complaint. I'm not complaining any more."

It was Wednesday. Thursday I ordered the illumination extinguished in the power pole, but Friday the cruising Streetlight Bench replaced it. Monday they installed the independent circuit, I could kick it off or on with my foot, however I desired. The cigars depressed me. The noises depressed me. The water in the buried brook depressed me, flowing, flowing, flowing, flowing, babies crying, people dying, I could feel it in the vibrations of my feet. It never ended. I began going crazy from depression. It became foggy at night, and the people were a blur, sometimes it was difficult to view the movement or motion within his store. What was I accomplishing?

Miss Willerts, Mrs. Marveaux, and Mr. Hefley were patients on the first three nights of the week, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Thursday I went home early. I was cold. Friday night I cashed a small check, five dollars. He took the check and placed it in his pocket still wet. "Will that be all?" he inquired. I bought a cigar, that was all. "That will be all," I replied, and he stated: "I thank you very kindly." I turned around and started out, he further stating: "Oh, by the way Mr. Cop, last night you forgot to kick the power pole back on."

"What power pole?" I inquired. Then I stated: "You're crazy, Mr.," and I continued walking. Yet why deny it? I had made many inquiries, I was illuminated by cigarettes, one way or another it was bound to get back to him, it was how the neighborhood is, he is appreciated, he extends credit and courtesies of every sort, he has lived all his life in the neighborhood, raised his children there, maintains his property, respects the peace, such a man is respected in that neighborhood or any other. I stated: "You've got no license to dispense."

He stated: "Maybe you're crazy, too."

"O.K." I bent my head, I removed my hat, it was a joke. "Here's my brain. Cut." He laughed, I laughed a little also, he dropped and lashed his tarp and turned out the lights. "Don't forget your beer sign," I stated. He went back and turned out his beer sign, in his hand was his knife. In the storage room he took off his white

coat, unpinning his badge, then pinning it on a fresh coat. The room was dark, his coat was white, he turned his lamp toward the window, and it shone against the triangles brown and blue. Behind him was a shelf of books made of crates standing side by side.

"What's the tape recorder for?" I inquired.

"To talk in," he replied. "I record their lives."

"Play me a life. Play me Mrs. Marinda Marveaux."

"I erased her," he stated. "Tapes are expensive. She is a woman who expected perfection, but men are not perfect, men are double-barreled, smoke if you wish." He turned the tape recorder on, a small red light shone, the spools went around and around, reflecting on the ceiling. In former times I was hypnotized by the spools going around and around, but later I did not mind them.

"Turn it off," I ordered. He turned it off.

He gave me a sheet of paper, *Good Rules for Business Men*. "This is all I dispense," he stated. "This is all I dispensed her, these are the simple wisdom of the ages. I recommend especially Number 13, speak up, for people must tell their troubles to one another, they discover their own mind with help, the mind is not such a mystery. They cannot pay much. Poor people cannot go downtown to the highpriced men. Accept the world, it's a low-income neighborhood."

I inquired, "This is all you dispensed her?"

"That's all," he replied. "We discussed the imperfections of her husband, which are numerous, but also his qualities, which are also numerous, he is steadily employed, he does not drink, he does not gamble, and he beat her only once in six years."

"You've got no license or authority to dispense," I stated.

"Why not eat your apple?" he inquired. He ran a small electric heater, the room grew gradually warmer, the heater switched off, the hour still was early, I agreed to eat my apple.

I inquired: "Where can I wash my apple?" He took me to a lavatory adjoining, it was clean but cool, I washed my apple, it was good to return to the warm room again. "Since when," I inquired, "does it take two hours to dispense a sheet of paper? Tuesday night she entered your store at 7:09, you turned out your lights, you entered this room, she departed at 9:11."

"We also talked," he replied.

"Where was she?" I inquired.

"Sitting where you are," he replied. I was in a leather chair.

"Did she sit or did she lie back flat?" I inquired, for the chair leaned back for comfort.

"Comme ci, comme ça," he replied. "However she desired."

"Where were you?" I inquired.

"I was right here," he replied.

It was a comfortable chair, my head rested on a barber-pillow, I leaned back, I sliced my apple, while outside the wind blew fog down the alley. "Go ahead and eat it," he ordered. "Enjoy something. An apple is an apple, don't be so cautious, the health of the apple overpowers the germs. Why are you so cautious? You screw the cap on your pen too tight, your pen clips too tight in your pocket, your writing is extremely small and cautious, your hat is a half a size too small, it leaves a red mark on your forehead. Do you think the world is lying in wait to steal your fountain pen?" He informed me that in former times he also was an extremely cautious man. He spoke in a soft, steady voice, I loosened my shoes, I loosened my tie, I smoked cigarettes. In those days I smoked three packages daily. We discussed smoking. When I was a boy I smoked cigarettes under the stairway, I thought nobody saw me, but Mr. Kayzee suggested that the smoke drifted up, I was observed by my father and others, I agreed it was a possible theory.

"Take off your coat," he advised. "Take off your gun, too." He possessed no gun, and he inquired whether I had ever shot a man or not. I replied that I did not know, for I shot into the shadows twice after Archie Wilson was attacked by hoodlums unknown. He inquired whether he might hear the story of Archie Wilson in the tape recorder, I agreed, the red light shone and the spools went around and around on the ceiling. Upon later occasions I heard my own voice on the tape. My voice grew stronger in later weeks, I became less depressed.

The hour grew later and later, and the wind died, but I did not leave, although it soon was midnight, and I became afraid, stating: "I cannot go, you must at least walk me to my machine, the hour is late and the neighborhood is unfamiliar to me."

"There is no reason to be afraid," he stated.

"Even in a machine a man is not safe," I stated. "You dare not even stop at the light at certain intersections, they are on you in a minute. Our own municipal streets are no longer even safe."

"The front page of the papers," he stated, "is not the story. Don't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid," I stated.

"Good," he replied, "because there is little to be afraid of."

"Then walk with me," I stated, but he refused. I could not go, I could not stay. What could I do? "You do not know the number of crimes committed every night, we are under-staffed, we are not respected, we are without power, young thugs are running wild, attorneys defend them, the judiciary is far too lenient, social workers bleed their hearts out, the boy had a bad beginning, excuse and forgive, meanwhile they leave court in a stolen machine full of billiard balls in high stockings, the streets are not safe, I cannot go," yet he refused to go with me. He unlashed his tarp and lifted it, and we stood on the sidewalk in front of the shop.

"Cross," he stated, "and kick on your power pole, walk to your machine, do not run, and drive home," but still I could not do as he directed. The wind was down, I lit a cigarette. "Consider," he stated, "that you were observed smoking under the stairway, not only by your father but by all the neighborhood. You were loved and protected by your neighborhood, although you thought it was filled with enemies. But the truth is, let a thief enter, let a man be lewd or molest a child, let a man assault, and the neighborhood will rise and crush him, then or now or anywhere or any time, the neighborhood defends itself. The police are few, the residents are many, the neighborhood is its own Department, it cures or mends, it regulates itself. There is some danger tonight, but there was always some danger every night, not more and not less, so cross."

I did as he advised, and I continued afterward for some time until my depression faded away. We said goodnight, I crossed the street, I kicked the power pole back on, I walked to my machine, I drove home, I advised Lieutenant Kline on the following day complainant withdrew complaint, I ordered the independent circuit discontinued, I resumed Convention Protection at that time.

THE VESTIBULE

BY KAATJE HURLBUT

WHEN it occurred to Robert Hope — he had either read something or heard a remark on the subject — that he had become much detached from his life, probably abnormally so, he did not turn to psychology for a labored explanation, and he did not seek what amiable nonsense his fancy might offer. He simply took note of it as he noted a hundred things a day: he reflected briefly and let the thought slip away into the dark of his mind where it would remain until some chance association called it up again.

In his reflection he sought to concisely define his life as he was aware of living it and his definition was simply his home-office-home routine. This accounted for the twenty-four hours, basically, that is; occasionally there was the club, the theatre, a bar downtown near his bus stop and a month in Maine each summer, and that was all. He did not detain the fleet notion that his life was more than this: he was not thinking of soul or of a predetermined pattern or anything so explicit, but only of some unrecognized activity in another stratum.

In his reflection he saw the detachment as not of his own making. He felt, merely, that something prevented him. That was the thought he held a moment in his mind, a thought as neat and final as though a ticker tape had fed it into his brain and left off with a row of dots: *something prevented him*.

And so, because he was prevented from engagement with his immediate living, and because no other substitute presented itself to

absorb his inner, vital tension, he became acutely aware of little things: of details, of isolated incidents, of his own . . . and other people's habits and of deviation from them, of things heard, touched, smelled and of things otherwise sensed. He would notice, reflect and let go. He concluded that these little things were the anchors which held him in place, that without them he would drift and lose identity, as if, at last, his identity had become but a response to these trivia.

He noticed that many people's eyes changed color with the weather; he noticed that an elderly woman who sat opposite him on the bus each morning washed her gloves three times a week: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays they were immaculate; and he noticed that often when he came home at night and stood in the vestibule with his key in his hand, he experienced, for a moment, the distinct feeling that he was about to enter the wrong house. And a more curious thing he noticed: he was never able to anticipate the feeling: it always took him by surprise.

Crown Street's row of brownstones was sedately impersonal. As closely as the houses rose square shoulder to square shoulder, looking coldly at the little park across the street, where an elaborate iron fence enclosed half-grown trees that stood like withered maidens dedicated to hopelessness, as identically as the houses existed side by side in form and color, they, each one, maintained a measured aloofness as if in defiance of their intolerable similarity.

Robert Hope lived at 121. His father had given him the house as a wedding present and, he said (his sentiments were dry and fitting), as compensation for a childhood spent in hotel apartments and boarding schools, his mother having died when he was less than a year old. During the twelve years of his marriage, whenever he thought of his father (who died suddenly the week after the wedding) an unrooted mental phrase skimmed across the surface of his mind: "This is my home, I live here," and he would glance about whatever room he was in, allowing remote perceptions to register the colors, textures, designs and relate them to their origins in Edith, his wife. For her possession of 121 Crown Street was total.

He had seen her first in the half-dark of a theatre and she was silent. The startling whiteness of her skin, lush and vulnerable, was like the petal of a gardenia and looked to him as though, if it were touched, the place touched would turn dark, bruised. She was

sitting a row ahead of him with a man he knew and until intermission, when he was introduced to her, he saw only the dark head, the back of her neck and her bare shoulders. He was not prepared for her face, though there was something curiously becoming in the slightly undershot jaw with its full-lipped mouth and the black eyes without luster: the face combined in exotic contrast with the exquisite whiteness of her skin. But her voice jarred him. Having responded with the full force of his sense of touch (his hands perspired and his thighs tensed) he attempted to shift his response to include her voice. The effort failed. Her voice was flat and faintly common. Later, he found her conversation fatuously self-centered and, when forced in another direction, strained and pretentious. As time went on (he found it a physical impossibility to stay away from her) he became almost frantic to find a way to keep her quiet. And when at last he asked her to marry him, even as he heard the words slip between his lips as thin and metallic as coins, one passionate thought filled his mind from wall to wall: *In the dark, and silent.*

But in the twelve years, Edith had never been silent in the dark: she murmured continuously and articulately and her language was breath-taking until it became merely sickening (gutter phrases intensified by animal sounds until they were her own words, their meanings distinct and full) and at last it was no more than a galling monotony.

As the years passed he began, gradually, to recognize life, as he had once felt it, as something that heaved and stirred around him as he passively trod a narrow path whose beginning and end were at 121 Crown Street. The vague hope that fingered his heart when the girls were born was eventually stilled. Julia was a thick slow-moving child, silent, with reproachful eyes and sudden rages. Margaret, swift and blue-eyed, was fairylike until she began to talk: her talk became an incessant whine, rising into a quarrel with someone, subsiding into a whine again; she seemed to grow tired of it herself, but she could not stop it. He tried to divert her, to soothe her so that she might have rest, but she only continued to whine, resisting comfort and at last the sound of her voice drove itself into his senses like a spike, disabling his compassion. Julia, absorbed with pet rodents and turtles and tanks of fish, ignored him as she ignored all people. Sometimes he would come upon her alone in a

room when she looked so small and so sorrowful that he would reach out with his hand and touch her, willing that he manifest whatever strange comfort she must need. She suffered his touch when she was little, but as she grew older, she would merely glance at his hand and move away, her dull secret eyes averted. So at last he left them to Edith and her extravagant concept of them: Margaret, said Edith, was like him, fastidious and cool and brilliant; Julia was like her, she said, receptive and artistic.

Edith, from time to time, painted bad portraits of friends' children. She didn't paint steadily; she had not studied painting; she had had "arts lessons" and "did portraits." On Robert Hope's birthday she gave him a portrait of the girls (propped against each other, simpering woodenly) and hung it in his study between his two precious marine etchings. She would wander into his study and say, as though for the first time, emotionally, intimately, "What do you *think* of it?" And he would always reply: "Very charming, Edith." She would look at him carefully then because when he smiled against the light rising from the top of the lampshade (when she entered his study, he stood and remained standing until she left) the reflection from his rimless glasses gave his smile an enigmatic aspect. He had noticed this in others who wore glasses, who stood just so, catching the light on their lenses. It was not something he did intentionally; he was simply aware of it when she became uncomfortable and changed the subject or left the room.

When he thought of his youth Robert Hope saw time as being of light and shadow and color. There had been a flickering winter when he was ten and his father lay seriously ill in a hospital; there was no one to read to him then and he began to read to himself, escaping for a little while each night the pall of dread before he turned to urgent fretful prayers and sleep. He recalled a summer of soft brilliance: he was seventeen and there was a girl who sat beside him on the beach and spoke, as he spoke, in brief painful phrases, until, as the summer passed, words flowed from them as easily and warmly as the white sand sifted between their fingers. During the war there had been periods, months or hours, when the gray monotone of waiting terminated in a flash of activity as sudden and as senseless as lightning.

But the twelve years at Crown Street stretched behind him under an even harsh glare: without shadow, without color. Idly now

and then he reflected that others who lived in this row of tall brown houses lived somewhere beyond the glare; that perhaps they were caught for only a moment in its beam when they crossed his path. Back and forth they went, in and out, up and down and nothing prevented them.

Most of them were professional people who travelled in their own circles and had no occasion to associate with each other. At 115 lived Mrs. Livingston Gill, a deaconess of the Church of the Ascension who walked somewhat sideways, decked in her deadly black veil, like a nimble spider, and was, to Robert Hope, an object of perpetual silent mirth; he always bowed very low when they met. The Towers, a retired actor and his wife who conducted a quiet exclusive theatrical club at 117, were drained to the same level and faded to the same degree and had about them an amiable worldliness. He nodded when he passed them and smiled and exchanged remarks on the weather. Between the Towers' and his own house, at 119, Mrs. Verplanck lived alone with two Filipino servants; when she had come to Crown Street she had just married her employer, an art dealer years older than she, who was almost immediately removed to a sanatorium where he died three years later. Since his death, she had travelled during the spring and summer months. Robert Hope saw her seldom: she was a woman of quietly arresting elegance; he bowed gravely to her on their rare meetings and always thought about her afterward: she reminded him of a pale flame, innocent of the dark, but alive to the danger of a sudden wind.

The people in the houses beyond his were an elderly attorney, who was an invalid and whose only contact with the world was through a series of nurses; a throat specialist; an electrical engineer whose name Robert Hope frequently heard, being himself one, but whom he had never formally met; and at the corner a woman who designed something. Edith knew what. He didn't. They didn't concern him: he couldn't remember ever having walked past their houses and seldom met them face to face. He knew the throat specialist, from the back, by his walk, because he frequently caught a cab mornings moments before Robert Hope reached his bus stop. He wondered briefly once if he would have known the man's face if he saw it. Or the face of the old man at the downtown newsstand where he bought a paper every morning: he knew every

cracked nail, every lumpy blue vein in the old quick hands, but he had no recollection of the face and no curiosity.

Every summer when he brought his family back from Maine, and Robert Hope went down to the cellar to have a look around, he noticed a patch of mold that had grown on the wall beside the stairs: it was roughly shaped like the map of Africa, but with the Cape of Good Hope too pointed. It grew the same way every summer and was one of the things he noticed, and he often wondered if his mind were a filing cabinet, how many little cards with the years written in the corner, would be filed under Noticing the Patch of Mold. Of all the summers in Maine, expensive and eventful, eagerly anticipated by Edith and the girls, enjoyed and photographed and discussed, what could he remember except a patch of mold which grew on the cellar wall while he was away? For an answer, he shrugged.

The things that tapped his attention, were noted, and dropped into the dark of his mind, were legion and varied. His dismay at feeling he was about to enter the wrong house became, in time, as habitual as the gust of wind that caught him at the corner each morning as he stepped beyond the wall of houses.

At first, however, he did not merely notice it and let it slip away. He tried to dismiss it with an explanation: the houses were, after all, identical, and he was inattentive. Never once did it occur to him that this would explain his being at the *wrong* house, and not at the right house.

But as time passed, the uneasy jump in his mind became a thing he noticed and put by, as did each successive stage of the incident. The jump: the subconscious mind's jangle of alarm to the conscious: wrong house! It happened as he stepped into the vestibule, key in hand, and the feeling had become so positive by the time he had fitted the key into the lock that he often withdrew it as, sheepish and annoyed, he turned to look up at the numbers on the glass panel over the outer door. Though it took but a glance, he read them deliberately, often grasping at the rationalization that, after all the nonsense of *thinking* he had come to the wrong house so many times, he had at last actually *done* it. A simple subconscious mechanism: inevitably committing a contemplated mistake. Ah, but there it would be: 121. The two backwards and the little heads of the ones turned the wrong way. Then a moment's unreasoning

rage: "One-twenty-one, God damn it. This is where you *live*, you fool!" And he would thrust the key into the lock again and turn it savagely, wishing he could twist it off.

And always at last came the appalling reflection that no matter how many times it happened, as he came down the street and mounted the steps, he was never able to anticipate it.

As disturbing as it was, the disturbance, because of his pervasive detachment, was only momentary. And only momentarily was he disturbed by a sense of unreality which, of late, occasionally accompanied him when he stepped inside the house. For in spite of the children's voices, in spite of the familiar atmosphere Edith created (a room changed subtly when she entered it, as though she brought in a quiet insistent commotion as an assertion of her presence) he felt that in some vague manner either he or they had become less than real. As Margaret ran past him in the hall without greeting his return, he would catch her and hold her by her thin little shoulders, saying:

"Aren't you going to speak to me?" Immediately she would regale him with a whining account of something Julia had done to her, while her restless eyes swept back and forth, not meeting his.

He looked up once to see Julia standing at the top of the stairs, silent, her eyes as without expression as they were without luster.

"Come down, please, Julia." She came down slowly and stood on the bottom step. "Well, what have you been doing?" he asked pleasantly, seeking the faintest expression in her eyes.

"Playing."

"Oh?"

She held out to him a limp lizard wrapped in a square of flowered cloth. "This is my baby. It's sick."

"Put that creature back in its cage," he said, and then, because he had spoken sharply, with a quick and gentle movement laid his hand on her cheek.

She drew back from his hand, looking at it, and turned away.

He stayed late one night at the office listening to Skinner. Skinner was his partner, a pale-eyed, red-faced man who threw himself into work or week-long drinking bouts with equal earnestness and whom Robert Hope disliked and pitied. It was not, he knew, the dislike, but the pity which made both of them uncomfortable. When Skinner would arrive late in the morning, white-lipped and

edgy, Robert Hope knew that he had fought with his wife and that he would remain in the office when the others had left and sit on the edge of Robert Hope's desk, swinging his foot and talking with a strained affability because he did not want to go home and he did not want to be alone. This close, forced contact sharpened his pity for the man. He would sit behind his desk, fingertips together, nodding, smiling now and then, listening, letting him talk and talk until the pity became so sharp it cut deep inside him, like a lancet opening a festering wound, a wound they somehow had in common, which the cutting relieved of a painful pressure.

It was seven o'clock when he left the office. He had not called Edith, as he usually did, to say he would be late. She would, he reflected, be either grossly understanding in reply to his apology, or she would be sullen. It depended on her mood. So he decided to have dinner downtown: might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. After dinner he went to a movie where he dozed for a couple of hours, came out and went into a bar where he had three drinks of rye and then caught a bus home.

When he stepped off the bus at Crown Street it was close to midnight; there had been a shower and the air was cool and clean; the night was more like spring than fall. The freedom of the hours behind him, the nap in the theatre, the good rye whiskey, the air and the quietness of the rainwashed street had swept him and left him clean and he began to whistle, noticing that he was whistling. (When did I whistle before?) The words of the jaunty French tune he whistled rippled through his mind just behind the sound. In the little park across the street an oblong puddle brightly mirrored the street light and caught his glance. As he turned his face toward it, softly, soundlessly, he collided with a woman. Instinctively his hands caught at her elbows to keep her from losing her balance and he found himself looking down into the pale, delicate face of Mrs. Verplanck.

The impulse to step back, remove his hat and apologize stirred as though in some distant area of his being as he stood a moment, simply holding her, looking intently at her, as if she were speaking and he were listening. But she did not speak; and when at last his impulse functioned and he said "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Verplanck" he noticed with mild surprise that he whispered. At her answering smile of gentle regret, he replaced his hat and stood with

his empty hands at his sides, watching her as she turned and walked up the steps of 119. He waited until she opened the door to the vestibule and softly closed it behind her.

He walked a few steps to his own house and stood a moment with his hand on the railing, wondering absently if she had been walking ahead of him down the street and he had collided with her as she turned to go up the steps, or whether she had been coming from the other direction. Presently his mind closed over the idle question and in its place arose the familiar vision of the pale flame, innocent of the dark, but trembling now as if a breath had touched it.

He had noticed that when he came in late at night and had not called Edith that, by way of some effect (his mind deliberately disdained "punishment") she would not leave the hall light burning. He stood a moment in the dark hall attempting to define a faint unpleasantness that plucked at one of his senses. Presently he defined it as the scent of Edith's perfume. It was expensive and powerful. She wore it only at night and only occasionally. In the morning following such a night, even after a hot shower, the stale curd of the scent still clung to him. He always associated the odor with a headache, recalling that, as a small child, he had often shared bus seats with large over-flowing women in furs and was sickened by the nauseous mingling of perfume and exhaust fumes. On the nights she wore it, if she was awake when he came to bed, or if, inadvertently, he awakened her, she would wait silently until he lay down beside her and then roll over against him and immediately begin her urgent monologue, without sentences, but with words: words that tumbled into a clear pool until it became a puddle of boiling mud.

He did not turn on the hall light (any light or sound might wake her) but feeling for the table near the foot of the stairs, he laid his hat and coat on it, and then took off his shoes and held them together in one hand, wryly reflecting on cartoons of befuddled drunks tip-toeing shoeless up to bed. He took two steps forward and felt for the banister with his hand. Grasping it, taking the last step, he put his foot down and experienced an instant of total panic as something alive and soft and frantic moved under his foot.

Recovering immediately, he cursed quietly from the bottom of his heart and groped for the lamp on the table and snapped it on. Beside the stairs a white rat with jewel pink eyes crouched, waiting to know the danger and offering him an absurd miniature reflection

of his own dread. One of Julia's poor creatures. He left the light on and mounted the stairs, thinking of the child's preoccupation with rats and lizards and swarms of tiny fish the color (he supposed) of primordial slime; she had once had a pair of horned toads and once a salamander which, she discovered, did not take to fire. They always died slowly. She would watch them intently when they showed signs of dying and handled them sensuously, squeezing and stroking them. Maybe this prisoner had plans of its own. More power to it.

In the upper hall the light from the street showed him the bedroom door. As he went in and silently closed the door behind him (thinking of the rat) the scent of Edith's perfume reached out, as if it would draw him into itself like a carnivorous jungle blossom.

He undressed and eased himself into bed and lay rigid beside her, scarcely breathing, waiting to know if she were awake. As the minutes passed in stillness his body retained its rigidity, but his mind disengaged itself, idly shuffling through impressions, visions, incidents, until it selected one.

It was an isolated recollection of a sand dune by the ocean and a little girl with pale orange hair running like mad along the ridge of the dune. She was thirteen or so and slight, and swift, and her long brown legs carried her so fast across the sand that they seemed to move in concert with invisible wings . . . until she dropped a shoe. She spun to a stop, and her pale bright hair fanned out in the sunlight like a nimbus.

He was conscious of his lips twitching against their stiffness seeking a smile, but the gentle disengagement of sleep had begun and the smile was denied. As he began to breathe deeply, the soft fingering of sleep seducing every muscle, Edith rolled over against him and spoke, hoarse and urgent.

Once again he found himself in quiet terror, cursing, groping for the light and when he had found it and snapped it on, astonished relief flooded his body and mind. He sagged against the head of the bed and looked at her as she sat upright, blinking at the light.

"What?" she said. "What's the matter? What is it?"

"Nothing," he said weakly. "I was asleep. Dreaming, probably. You startled me."

"You startled *me*."

"I'm terribly sorry." He sighed and his head began to throb. "I

have a devil of a headache. I may not be able to sleep, so I'll go downstairs for a while. I don't want to disturb you." He looked away from her and reached for the glasses on the table. He put them on and when he stood up to put on his robe, the throbbing in his head became a pounding. He knew he should offer a more elaborate explanation and, under the circumstances, a delicate apology, but the pounding in his head sickened him, and he left the room without facing her again.

In another month Robert Hope went to his doctor about headaches. In spite of his orderly retentive memory for detail, he could not, when he tried, pinpoint the headaches: he knew only that they were frequent and intolerable and that, as his ophthalmologist assured him, he could discount his eyes. He had read somewhere that pain was not retained, as such, in the memory; that it was dissolved and reduced to a sediment of circumstantial association (though he doubted that this was any more so of pain than of desire or hunger, or their gratification, for that matter). But the headaches were so frequent that their memory and anticipation created a circle of immediacy which precluded reflection, so that even associations eluded him. He recalled Skinner's reference to headaches and tension. Perhaps, he thought, that was what it was, not that the cause in itself interested him. Any illness, his own or other people's, bored him; he had no memory for the names of diseases or for medical terms which some people seemed to enjoy mouthing with mysterious importance. Let a doctor know what it was and name it if he must, but let him cure it.

His doctor, an old man with sensitive cool hands, had been a friend of his father's. The glass canister on top of a book case was labeled "cotton" but when he was a little boy it had contained cinnamon sticks. Now, he saw, it was filled with lollypops with looped string handles. (Edith, he reflected with regret, had always taken the girls to a six foot female pediatrician with a thunderous voice and a shaded lip.)

"When my nurse admitted a patient a little while ago," the old man said after the examination, abruptly switching from the headaches they had been discussing, "I glanced through the door and observed you smiling to yourself. If you'll tell me why you were smiling, you can have a lollypop."

"I didn't know I was smiling."

"All right. Do you remember what you were thinking about?"

He thought back. "Yes. People. I like waiting rooms."

He liked waiting rooms of all kinds. He liked the wonderfully impersonal atmosphere where something as noncommittal as a cough was enough to make people avert their eyes. And contrarily he liked the communication between strangers. Unimpeded by relationships, by names, the sound of voices, the inflections of speech, a cool vital communication was possible; necessary and profound information was there for a glance. The spontaneity of odd little mannerisms warmed him. He was touched by the stark vulnerability of a face naked of explanation and excuse and the trappings of compensation. Total strangers, in their profound common knowledge of one another, were no less wistfully amiable (in spite of all) than old, old friends.

The old man was watching him, nodding. "I see. You may think not, but I do. Now," he said, "tell me something that bothers you. Nothing serious necessarily. Just anything, offhand."

He felt it coming to the surface and tried to head it off but it slipped through into speech as light through a crack in a door: "When I go home at night, I keep thinking I've come to the wrong house. And I can never anticipate it."

The old man continued to look at him, nodding. Presently Robert Hope said gravely: "Am I funny?"

"No, you're not funny. You're tired. Seriously so. Try a couple of weeks alone, if you can manage it. You can? Good. And don't kill yourself trying to relax: simply do as you please." He smiled. "Think of the happy hours you could spend in waiting rooms. Why, you could begin by arriving at the station a couple of hours early."

Two weeks. Back by the middle of December. He thought about it and felt no interest, noticing that he felt no interest, and decided that it was part of being tired. Why, he wondered, hadn't he known he was tired?

He went far south and lay on a dazzling strip of sand, day after day absorbing the wondrous solitude. He slept a great deal and woke not knowing where he was and after he had ascertained where he was, he was not sure it meant to him what it should: I am here, but where is here, and where is there? The absence of the familiar, the freedom from the infinite things he had noticed day after day

for years, those little anchors which had held him in place, gave the days and the living of the days an aspect of limitless time and life: there were no edges and there was no end. He recalled once having thought that he would drift and be lost without those anchors. But it was not the case; for he felt a diffuse union with sea and sand and light and air, his body but a symbol of his presence.

The only thing that tapped his attention and became a familiar daily occurrence was a silent encounter with a little boy of about four. He was wiry and deeply sunburned and his eyes were a blazing blue and so intense in their gaze that they might have set fire to the things they watched: The shells. Each morning before his nurse called him from the beach he would squat on his haunches beside Robert Hope and lay out on the sand a row of shells, new ones each day. Then he would contemplate them with his fiery gaze. Presently he would flick a glance at Robert Hope and point to one of them, a shell more curious than the rest or more beautiful, point to it and, bringing his small finger closer, touch it and give it a little push. Knowing that the child did not wish to speak or be spoken to, Robert Hope would pick up the shell, examine it closely and, with a grave nod, replace it in the line. This was satisfactory: the little boy would gather up the shells then and leave, without a word or a backward glance.

When he boarded the plane for home on the morning of the last bright day, it was with as deep a sense of well-being as he had ever felt. For the first time he thought of the headaches and realized he had not had one in the two weeks; he recalled the old man's astute questioning. "Tell me something that bothers you. Nothing serious necessarily." "When I go home at night, I keep thinking . . ." He smiled to himself, at himself: a tense, weary self, absurdly serious, imaginative; a self he had shed as one sheds a binding garment. He dozed beneath the vibrant drone of the plane's engines and, once in sleep, rose above the sound, dreaming that the sky had absorbed the sea and the dry world was suspended in mist.

The plane landed in the snow. As he stepped into the airline's limousine he was thinking of a toy he had once had: a small glass ball which enclosed a red-roofed house and a fir tree, a tranquil little world until you shook the ball and it clouded suddenly with a swirling blizzard. When he got out of the limousine, instead of tak-

ing a cab home, he walked cross town in the snow, enjoying it, and caught a bus where he always did.

There was no wind and it was snowing so thickly as he stepped into Crown Street that he could scarcely see the street light by the little park. He was reminded of the feeling he had had, lying on the beach, of merging with a limitless world without edges, without end.

As he approached the house, he reached for his key, having forgotten for the moment that he had not taken it with him. He mounted the steps that were padded with snow, opened the outer door and stepped into the vestibule.

All at once he was swept by a wave of familiarity so warm, so dearly pleasant that he stood still and closed his eyes, feeling the sting of tears behind his eyelids. Then he blinked, compressing his lips, thinking: *I'm home, I'm home, and I'm glad I'm home.* He pushed the bell button, imagining how it must sound inside the house, coloring the night silence with its silver tone.

During the moment of waiting he smiled to himself: his odd little malady was cured. He was home and he knew it. The door was opened then and he found himself looking calmly into the familiar face of Mrs. Verplanck.

Neither of them spoke for a long suspended moment. Presently he felt the slow, mechanical movement of his arm and hand as he removed his hat, and heard his voice, muted and dull:

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Verplanck. I seem to have lost my way."

She answered only with her gentle smile of regret. He bowed and turned away and she closed the door.

Slowly, heavily, forcing his legs into motion, he walked down the steps, feeling once again the sting of tears behind his eyelids. But these were burning tears of gross, crushing disappointment. As though paralyzed, he stood so long at the bottom of the steps of 119 that snow gathered in the folds of his sleeves and on his shoulders and the brim of his hat. At last, with deliberate effort, he began to move.

It seemed a long time later that he stood in the vestibule of his own house. Again, by habit, he felt for his key and not finding it, remembered. As he raised his hand toward the bell button,

he started and jerked around to look at the numbers in the panel above the outer door. He cursed weakly, straining to make out the numbers against the dim light. Was he wrong again? He had walked past 121, then, and this was 123. Peering at the numbers until his eyes focused, he made them out at last: 121 — the two backwards, the little heads of the ones turned the wrong way.

With a weariness he had never experienced in his life, a weariness he would not have supposed a man could bear, so like a crushing weight it was, he again raised his hand toward the bell, but his hand failed him and dropped heavily to his side.

He bent his head and closed his eyes and stood for a long time in total submission to exhaustion. At last a feeble finger of thought groped in his mind seeking the old detachment, the old familiar feeling — easy and safe — that something prevented him. But it had collapsed. Nothing prevented him now; nothing protected him. Self-knowledge, complete and final, had collapsed the serene area of vacuum and this exhaustion was the result of its sudden weight.

Presently the finger of thought groped again, feeble and anxious, trying to discover whether there was the strength to bear this weight, to move ahead with it, to act: to think and speak, to perform. But the only thing like strength it found was his profound desire for strength — a sustained and inexhaustible strength — to bear the weight and absorb the exhaustion.

Deliberately then he turned his mind upon them: Edith and the girls, and winced as if with pain, as if desperate hands clawed at his heart. And his desire for strength became an anguish. For his knowledge, his understanding of them, his responsibility toward them crushed him, like a mountain of debt, unacknowledged through the years, and undischarged.

There was no possible way of shrugging off this weight so that he might step lightly through some other door, for it was of his own substance and inseparable. If there was ever to be rest from the weariness, it would be through the door in front of him. As he once more lifted his hand to ring the bell, it occurred to him that the contemplation of rest might conjure strength.

A GIRL FOR WALTER

BY THEODORE JACOBS

I NEVER KNEW, really, what Walter was, but I always called him a moron. Everyone did without ever thinking that he might be something higher or lower.

Walter delivered groceries in our neighborhood, and his appearance on the street where as kids we played usually put an end to our ordinary games.

"Here comes the moron," we would call to one another as we sighted him pushing his delivery cart in our direction. Often you could spot Walter two or three blocks away. He always wore the same clothes. Brown peaked cap, green shirt open at the neck, and gray levis. He was very tall, and his head, which was thin and flattened, seemed at a distance to belong to some immense and ancient bird.

"Hi ya, Walt, boy," we would greet him as he approached. Then we would follow him for a few blocks, mimicking his wide based stride. When he turned, angered, we would dance in wide circles around him, flicking at his cap, snapping at his apron ties.

"Hey, Walter, how's your love life?"

"Why don't you show us how you do it, lover?"

"Hey, Walt, I hear Ava Gardner's looking for you."

These were the taunts that would drive Walter wild. By comparison, remarks about his looks or his mind scarcely touched him. Assailed by these he would simply keep pushing along with that big, stiff-legged stride of his. If he stopped at all, it was only to give you the finger, or perhaps to make a single thrust in your direction.

But in the matter of girls it was different. When we started that, leaping and skipping on all sides of him, he would stand with his back to the handles of his cart and sweep an arm back and forth, round and round, trying to catch one of us. Walter was exceptionally strong, and if he caught someone he would hold the victim by the shirt very close to him. Then he would work his face and shout,

"I'm gonna get a girl. I'm gonna get a girl." Sometimes he would repeat himself six or eight times before he'd let you go. Even when we got tired of him and went back to playing on our own block, you could hear him on the streets shouting the same thing. Sometimes he kept it up for more than an hour.

At our house we never used Walter to deliver groceries because my mother was afraid of him. She always walked a bit faster when she saw people like that on the street anyway, and when, one afternoon, she happened to pass Walter and became aware of his determination to get himself a girl, she gave him lots of room.

But as soon as my grandmother came to live with us things changed and we began to see a good deal of Walter. My grandmother had always been interested in peculiar people. She was always worrying about folks that no one else seemed to care about. Over the years she collected people with all kinds of problems — men who drank too much, or women who ate too much and looked like steam rollers, or kids who took dope, or people who were just plain lonely. For several years she worked with church groups, but finally she had to quit. She just couldn't get along with the other church ladies. The reason, I suppose, was that Grandmother was not at all a reformer. She could be strict all right, but efforts to change human nature repelled her. If she met an alcoholic, for instance, she'd lecture him, but not on the perils of alcohol. She would tell him how to drink properly. Once she printed up a list of ten different techniques for holding liquor. The important thing for Grandmother was that things be done well, with taste and control. She could tolerate almost any kind of behavior provided it involved no basic loss of dignity. Of course, Grandmother's ideas made her extremely unpopular among the more traditional members of her church, and a good many people called her a libertine. That did not bother Grandmother a bit. She always said that church people did not really understand religion.

As soon as Grandmother heard about Walter she told my mother

that she wanted him to deliver our groceries from then on. Well, you can imagine what a fuss my mother made (she was well up on crimes of passion), but Grandmother simply said, "Posh. You're forty-two years old, Selma," and called the store where Walter worked.

So right up to the time Grandmother died and we moved out of the neighborhood, Walter came to our house every day. Immediately he and Grandmother became friends. It was inevitable. Before he had the groceries on the table the first morning he'd already told Grandma that he was going to get himself a girl friend. One thing you could say for Walter, he never needed an introduction to let you in on his plans. I did not pay too much attention to him, but Grandmother seemed pleased with Walter's idea, and said how very nice she thought it was. Then she told him that, in her opinion, the trouble with young men today was that they did not know how to be artists when it came to courtship and marriage. Before I could say anything — Walter just stood with the peak of his cap way off to the side — she was telling us all about Grandpa and herself and the over fifty years they were married. Grandmother was a storyteller in the old tradition, and young love was her specialty. Within a few minutes she had called back a world of high romance and chivalry that was never very far from her reach. She spared Walter no details in recounting the story of her greatest love affair. From first chaperoned meeting to the sacred exchange of marriage vows, Grandmother spun a lover's tale which would have made the romance of Tristan and Isolde seem a passionless imitation by comparison.

Through it all, Walter watched Grandmother very carefully. As she began to speak he worked his mouth from side to side as he did whenever we teased him on the street, and he kept rubbing his palms, which had begun to sweat, against his trouser legs. I thought he might bolt, but he didn't. He just stood there fidgeting and listening and watching Grandmother.

When he had finished she asked Walter very sweetly, "And where do you go to meet your young ladies, Walter?"

Of course Walter had never reached that stage of planning, so he just worked his face a bit more and did not say anything.

"Well I can certainly understand how young people would have difficulty meeting one another today," Grandmother said gently.

"Everything is so poorly organized." Then in a lower voice, "If you should be introduced to a nice young lady, Walter, would you know how to act?"

"What? Naw, I don't know," said Walter very loudly.

"Well you really should," replied Grandmother, and she explained to him how, under varying circumstances, he might be expected to behave.

After that, whenever Walter delivered at our house my grandmother had a little talk for him in preparation for his courtship. It was lunatic, really, but Grandmother took it seriously, and right until the time she passed away, she was busy trying to give Walter some understanding of the social graces. She arranged her talks in chapters. The first one, called *Dressing to Call on a Lady*, carried Walter to his front door attired in a well-tailored, conservative suit, either blue or gray (he had his choice). Then the next few times he learned the way to behave at the young woman's home; how to address her parents, whether to smoke or not, and so on, in a group of talks entitled *Manners Count!* At this point he was almost ready to start out for the evening, but not yet. First came two theoretical discussions, *Flower, Yes or No?* and *Why Curfew?*, neither of which seemed particularly interesting to Walter, who played little games with his fingers through both of them. Usually, however, he was very polite. He would stand leaning against the silverware drawer in our kitchen, arms folded over the durable green shirt, his peaked cap on a tilt, and make wrinkles in his nose which looked like a sign of disapproval, but was only his way of listening. When Grandmother was finished he'd collect whatever bottles there were to be returned to the store, first always rubbing his hands across the seat of his levis to gain a better grip on the bottle necks. Then he would leave with his awkward, pendulum stride. For a long while he said nothing in response to Grandmother's talks, and you never knew what he was thinking or if, really, he thought at all.

If Grandmother expected more from Walter, she gave no hint of her disappointment. She went on, in the next days, to answer the question, *What Can a Young Couple Do In New York?* (subtitle: *The Riches of the City*), listing, with brief discussion, the places which in her experience had proved the most delightful to visit. As far as I was concerned even a moron would know better than to go near any of those spots: The Historical Society; the Frick Col-

lection; The Cloisters — you'd have to be completely insane to want to go there. But Walter just stood against the drawer, wrinkled up his nose, and took it all in without a word.

Then she went on to more complex things. *Morally* more complex, she said. These talks were called *At the Door*. In this series the goodnight kiss took up two sessions (the boy looks at it and the girl looks at it) and then there was one each on *How Not to be Invited In*, a manual of don'ts, and *Arranging the Next Date*, in which my grandmother questioned the advisability of extending another invitation at the door. (It gives the girl a sense of security but, by demanding an immediate answer, puts pressure on her which she may later resent.)

During these days Walter listened intently and never took his eyes off Grandmother. He stood closer to her than before and watched her face very carefully as she made her points. Whenever he saw her smile a little he smiled, too, very quickly, and then if she became serious again, Walter frowned and tried to look solemn.

Following these sessions Grandmother dealt with *Problems of the Early Months of Courtship*, the *Ripening Relationship*, and was partially through *The Big Decision* when Walter stopped her.

"Know what, Mrs. Gorman?" he said to Grandmother. "I got a girl."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Grandmother.

"No kiddin' I really do. Kinda girl like you always talking."

"Isn't that wonderful. How did you meet her, Walter?"

"Some fella introduce me."

"Isn't that exciting? Tell me about her, is she very nice?"

"I like her an awful lot," said Walter.

"Well she must really be charming," said Grandmother, "what is her name?"

"I forget. I think Betty somethin'. I told her my name's Walter."

"Were you very polite?"

"Yeah. Alla time. I told her very nice."

"I'm proud of you, Walter. Was she pretty?"

Walter didn't answer to that. He just repeated himself a few times about how he got this girl. It seemed as though he thought no one would ever believe him if he said something just once.

"I'll bet she is lovely, though," Grandmother went on. "I hope

you will always remember to wear a coat and comb your hair when you call on her. You must always promise me to be a gentleman."

After that Grandmother went more speedily. She discussed *Talking With the Father*, *Choosing The Ring* and *The Engagement Party* in rapid succession, as though Walter might up and get married before she'd told him everything. In no time she had him at the altar. She did that very well. Even I was a little sad to see him go.

But then she got into trouble with Mother. My mother took a dim view of these sessions with Walter to begin with — she said to Father that Grandmother had finally gone out of her mind — but when she heard that Grandmother had just married Walter off, she became genuinely alarmed.

"Now what?" she said defiantly.

"What do you mean, now what?"

"You know very well what I mean. What happens after he's married?"

"Oh, for goodness sakes, Selma, grow up."

"Don't oh for goodness sakes me, Mother. Thanks to you, that idiot says he has a girl friend. What else are you going to teach him?"

"That is not something that is taught," replied Grandmother, "it's a matter of practice."

"Now listen to me," said Mother, "I know all about things. If anything happens they can hold you as an accessory."

"To what?"

"To anything. To anything that happens."

"I hate to disappoint you, my dear," said Grandmother, "but in these things there are no accessories."

Nothing Mother said helped. Grandmother went right ahead and gave *The Consummation*. It was a big success. I enjoyed it very much. Like I told the fellows, Grandma could have written one of these drugstore books.

Soon after that Grandmother died. She had just finished *The First Six Months*, *A Time of Adjustment* when she passed away in her sleep. I could not get myself to believe it. Somehow I did not think Grandmother would ever die. Even when I saw her in her bed, I didn't quite believe it. I expected at any time she'd be up to tell us that we were crazy to think she'd allow herself to do a

stupid thing like that. And it was only after she was out of sight, when they'd lowered her body and covered it, that I knew that she was really gone.

The morning after her death, when Walter came, my mother went to the door, and took the groceries out of his hands.

"Mrs. Gorman's dead," she said quickly. "She died last night."

Either Walter did not fully understand my mother or else he thought she was lying to him. He started to come in. Mother held the door.

"Can't you understand? She's dead. No one's here. She died last night. Please don't come back here again."

For a moment longer Walter stood in the doorway, then Mother closed the door on him.

"What a fool," she said, "God, how Grandmother thought she could do anything with that moron."

Right then she called the store and cancelled the delivery service.

"Please keep that Walter away from here," she told the man.

After that I did not see Walter again for some time. Right after the funeral we'd moved to another neighborhood and I had lost track of him. Then one day, not far from where we used to live, I spotted him on the street. He was at a distance and for a moment I was uncertain if it was really he. There was the cart and the familiar gait, but there was something, too, that wasn't quite Walter. Then I saw what it was. The clothes that had often identified Walter for me before anything else—the cap, the green shirt, the levis, were gone. In their place Walter wore a suit that you knew, even at a half-block's distance, had been bought in a secondhand store. The coat was double-breasted, stiff, long, and overwhelming, of the kind you hardly ever saw any more. The trousers were full and shapeless. In addition he wore a white shirt the collar of which pointed up at the edges, and a painted tie. I waited, and when he had reached me, I began to walk with him.

"Hello, Walter," I said. "Do you remember me?" Quickly he swung his face toward me, his eyes narrowed. Then, with recognition, his face brightened.

"Oh yeah. Hi ya. How you," he said loudly. Not stopping, he extended a hand across the handle of the cart.

"I'm fine, Walter. How are you doing?"

"Thank ya. Okay. How you doin'?"

"Swell."

We walked for a few steps in silence. Caught up in my new life, I had forgotten about Walter and Grandmother and the crazy sessions they had together, but there, walking with Walter, it somehow seemed as though they were still going on. I turned to him.

"How is your girl friend, Walter?"

Suddenly he was on me, clutching, tearing my shirt, wrenching me against him, holding his face to mine.

"She's still alive," he cried out. "She's still alive," a loud, uncontrolled cry.

Then he let me go, thrusting me to the pavement, and continued, shouting, down the street. I picked myself up and looked after him, but he had already swung the corner. For a moment or two after he was gone I could still hear his voice. Then I lost his cries among the shouts of boys playing.

THE YELLOW BERET

BY MARY LAVIN

MAYBE it's the same murderer," Mag said.
"How could it be the same?" cried Don. "Wasn't the other one down at the docks? Do you never look at the papers?"

To please him, she peered across the breakfast table at the *Irish Times* in his hand, but without her glasses the sun made one of everything on the table — plates, napery, and newsprint. Besides, she still thought it could be the same. Dublin was a small city for two murders in one night. Not that the North Wall, where the first one happened, ever seemed a real part of Dublin to her at all. Wasn't it jutting halfway into the English Channel? She had been out to the Pigeon House fort once, but for the rest she had only seen the long sea wall from the deck of the B. & I. boat — seen it sliding past as the steamship pulled out into the Alexandra Basin. Through the cranes and ship's rigging, the wide wharf could be seen narrowing into a place with no human habitations; nothing but coalyards, and warehouse yards, and the power station of Pigeon House, its windows lit by day as well as night with a cold inimical light. Then it narrowed again until it seemed only a promenade for birds, bollarded here and there and splattered with glaring white droppings. It was strange that a place where she had never been should be so vivid in her mind, but she could picture the exact place where it happened, a place where steps led down into the sea, senseless steps, more than half of them always under water, wobbly-looking and pale, with sometimes a wash of water, thin as

ice, going over the top. Here it happened, surely? Not at the sea steps, not near the edge, but where, in an abortive bit of wall, an iron gate stood giving entrance or egress to nowhere. She saw the gate distinctly. It was reinforced top and bottom with rusty corrugated iron cut in jags. So vivid. Too vivid. In the sunny morning room, Mag felt cold.

Resolutely, she forced her mind back upon her own concerns. She'd soon have to call Donny. She glanced to see if the entrance card for his examination was still propped in front of the clock, and she looked around the room to make sure there was nothing else he was likely to forget — his pen, or the key of his locker in college. But as her eyes moved about the room, she became aware that Don was critical of her lack of attention and had perhaps been so for some time. "I hope we're not going to have a wave of crime!" she said.

"'Wave of crime!'" he scoffed. "I told you there was no connection between the two crimes. You're as bad as the newspapers." But as he read on, he became more amiable. "I admit it's a disturbing business," he conceded. "It will have a very upsetting effect on the general public, I'm afraid!"

"I don't see why!" Mag cried. "I don't see why anyone should be upset — ordinary people, I mean; there's always a reason for these murders! Don't tell me they come out of a clear sky! I see no reason why people should be concerned at all about them. Take that girl at the docks. I'm sure what happened to her was only the end of a long story!"

"Not necessarily," said Don curtly. "As a matter of fact, they're looking for a Dutch sailor who only went ashore a few hours before the murder."

"But he knew her from another time ashore, I suppose, and —"

"Not necessarily."

Mag reddened. She hadn't understood that it might all have happened in that gateway, not only the murder but . . . well . . . it all.

"Oh!" she said slowly, repulsed, and then her voice quickened. "Oh, Don," she cried, "let's not talk about it. Let's not even think about it. You know how I feel about that kind of thing." It was not so much a feeling, however, as an attitude. She always maintained that they lived in a different world — she and Don and Donny —

from the world where such things happened. To talk about that other world, or to think about it too much, could bring the worlds too close. Keep them separate was her instinctive cry. It wasn't easy, though. That occurrence at the docks still kept its grip on her own mind. There! The bleak wall and the purposeless gate were forming once more before her eyes. Only this time there was a figure of a man in the gateway, bending downward and with his back to her. Unreasonable relief flowed through her that his face was averted, for if he straightened up and turned her way his face would confront her — and with panic she realized that it would be a face she knew. How could that be? How could the face of a strange Dutchman be familiar to her? Then, as she feared, he turned, or half turned, until his eyes fixed on her, for his head seemed suddenly to be implacably set in its pose. It was as if it had no power to move, and yet within itself every cell of skin and every rib of hair quivered with a terrible motion, while the one enormous white whorl of the ear seemed to whirl like the patterned space about him. For the gateway had gone. Only when she saw the background against which he was outlined did she realize her foolishness. Van Gogh! The self-portrait! He was her Dutchman. Humbly this time and wholly attentive to him at last, she listened to Don reading out the details of the other murder.

"This other poor creature" — he nodded down at the paper — "this other poor creature was the soul of respectability —"

"It was a woman, too?"

"An elderly spinster," said Don. "A schoolteacher, I think it said." He bent and looked for verification to the paper. "Yes, a schoolteacher living in Sandford Road. Respectable enough address! Over fifty, too!"

But Mag rushed over and grabbed the paper out of his hand. "Over fifty? Oh, no, Don! No! Why didn't you tell me? That's terribly sad. I didn't realize. I thought it was another of those ugly businesses. Why didn't you tell me it was so sad? The poor creature!"

Don stared at her. "What's sadder about it than the girl on the docks?" he asked.

But Mag had got her glasses and was gathering up the pages of the paper. "Where is the front page? Was there a picture of the poor thing?"

"I don't think so," said Don. "There was a picture of that girl, though! She was only seventeen. A lovely-looking girl. Now that was what you might call sad! Oh, I know the sort she was, and all that, but she was so young. She had her whole life ahead of her. There's no knowing but she might somehow have been influenced for good before it was too late. And anyhow," he said limply, "the other poor thing —" He shrugged his shoulders. "She can't have had much of a life. She can't have had much to look forward to in the future. Lived alone, kept herself to herself — an odd sort, apparently. Say what you like, it wasn't the same as being seventeen!"

"Oh, stop it, Don. I can't bear it. You don't understand. To come to such an end after a lifetime of service." Mag was poring over the paper. "Yes! She was a teacher. To make it worse, she was a kindergarten teacher. Oh, the poor thing. I can't bear to think of it. The head was battered in — with a stone, they think — and bruises on the neck and back."

"Not a sex crime, anyway," said Don.

"Oh, Don, how can you? There's no question of anything like that! She was over fifty! Fifty-four. And several people have already come forward to testify to her character. She led a normal, regular —"

"Nothing very normal or regular about wandering the streets in the small hours!"

"Oh, you didn't read it properly." Mag consulted the paper again. "She was *found* in the small hours, but it was *done* before midnight. And it can't have been so very late either, or the morning paper wouldn't have a report of it! They haven't given the pathologist's report yet, but the police put the time between eleven and twelve. She wasn't found earlier because the body was dragged into someone's front garden!"

"Nice for those people!" said Don.

"How can you joke about it! Do you realize that if she had been left in the street, there might have been a spark of life in her when she was found — although it seems she wouldn't have been found at all until daylight only a couple coming home from a dance happened to step inside the garden gate."

"Nice for them, too!" Don said irrepressibly. "Oh, there's more about it in the back of the paper. They're looking for information

that may lead to the recovery of a yellow beret believed to have been worn by the victim earlier in the evening."

Mag pressed her lips together. "Poor unfortunate girl! She little thought when she was putting on that beret — "

"It wasn't the girl! It was the other woman."

"The elderly woman? Are you sure? A yellow beret! It sounds more like what a young girl would wear, surely?"

"The old girl must have fancied herself a bit, it seems."

"Oh, Don, don't take that tone again, please. I'm certain it was simply a case of some fellow attacking her in the hope that she might have money on her. He probably didn't intend anything more than to stun her, but maybe she screamed, the poor thing, and he got frightened and hit her again to keep her quiet. Maybe he didn't realize he'd killed her at all."

"Then why did he drag her into that garden?"

"Oh, I forgot about that."

"You forgot about calling Donny, too," Don said. He had got his hat and coat in the hall and was putting them on.

"Oh, he has plenty of time yet," said Mag. "All the same, I'll go right up now and call him before I do anything else," she said. At the door, she turned back. "Don't go till I come down," she said, quite without reason.

Or was it, she thought afterward, that even then, at the foot of the stairs, a vague uneasiness had already taken possession of her? Had she, all morning, been unconsciously aware of a silence upstairs, different altogether from the merely relative silence when the boy was up there but asleep? Certainly halfway up the stairs she looked into his room through the banister rail, and she was outrageously relieved to see that his bed had been slept in, although he was not in it.

"Oh, you're up?" she cried, talking to him, although she wasn't sure whether he was in the room, behind the door perhaps, taking down his clothes from the clothes hooks, or in the bathroom — or where? "Where are you?" she asked, when she saw he wasn't in the room. "Are you in there, Donny?" she asked outside the bathroom door. "Where are you, Donny?" she asked sharply, still addressing herself to him. But when she leaned over the banisters to know if he was downstairs, it was to Don she called. "Is he down there, Don?"

"Why would he be down here!" Don had come to the foot of the stairs. She thought there was an uneasy note in his voice. He started up the stairs.

"Why are you coming up?" she demanded.

Then she must have begun to cry, because he shouted at her. "Stop that noise, for God's sake, Mag! The boy probably stayed out last night. But what of it? If I had a pound note for every time I stayed out all night when I was his age!"

"But he didn't stay out! Wasn't he in bed when I brought up his hot jar last night?"

"He's gone out somewhere, then, I expect," Don said.

"Where? And when? I was down early. There wasn't a stir in the house — I didn't hear a stir till I heard you!"

Together they stood stupidly, one above the other, in the middle of the stairs.

"He must have gone out during the night, then," said Don.

"But why? And why didn't he tell us?" she said. "He knows I'm a light sleeper. He knows I never mind being wakened. Many a night before his other exams he came into my room and sat on the end of the bed to talk for a while when he couldn't sleep."

"Well, come downstairs, anyway," Don said, more gently. "There's no use standing up here in the cold. He didn't have a sign of drink on him last night, I suppose?"

"Has he ever had?"

In spite of anxiety that was creeping over him, too, Don was irritated by her righteous tone. "Look here, Mag," he said, "it wouldn't be the end of the world, you know, if he *did* take a drink! You can't expect to keep them off it forever. Moderation is all we can demand from him at his age."

But Mag set her face tight. "I'd never believe it of him," she said. "Not Donny!"

"Well, how else are you going to account for this?"

"Maybe he thought of something he wanted to find out before the exam. You know Donny! He'd think nothing of getting up and dressing again and going out to ask some of his pals — not like other fellows that would be too lazy and would leave it to the morning; Donny would never chance leaving it to the morning!"

"But if that was the case he'd have been back in an hour or so."

"Unless he stayed talking, wherever he went!"

"He would have telephoned!"

"In the middle of the night?"

They looked at each other dully.

"You don't suppose . . . he might have met with an accident or something?"

"I never thought of that," Don said.

Yet now it seemed such an obvious thought.

"Hadn't we better do something, so, just in case?" Mag said.

He went over to the hall table where the telephone stood.

"Street accidents are usually brought to Jervis Street Hospital, but I suppose all the hospitals have casualty wards. I wonder where I ought to try first?" His hesitancy left him, and confidently he put out his hand to take up the receiver. "I know what I'll do; I'll ring the police. That's the thing. They must get reports from all the hospitals." He turned to her. "Did he have his name on him, I wonder? Or any form of identification?"

When she didn't answer, he looked up. She had gone very white in the face.

He put down the phone. "Don't look like that, Mag," he said. "I'm sure he's all right. It was only to reassure you that I was phoning at all. We've got a bit hysterical, if you ask me. He'll breeze in here any minute. And look here, Mag, let me give you a bit of advice. When he does come back . . ."

But he saw that she was in no condition for taking advice.

"Don't ring the police, anyway," she said.

It was the way she said it, dully and flatly, that made him feel suddenly that whatever had come into her mind was out of all proportion to his own vague fears. "You're not keeping anything from me, are you?" he asked sharply.

"Oh, no!" she cried. "It's just that I don't think we ought to draw attention to him, in case —"

"In case he got himself into some scrape or other? What scrape could he get into?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said, "but it seems a bad time to draw attention to him — with all this going on . . ." She glanced vaguely at the newspaper.

He got her meaning at once, and his face flushed angrily. "You can't mean that! You just don't know what you're saying!" he said. "Your own son!"

"Oh, don't go on that way!" she cried. "You didn't listen to me. You didn't wait for me to finish."

He wasn't listening then, either. He was just staring at her.

"Oh, please!" Mag said wearily. "I only meant that he might be innocently involved, drawn into something against his will, or even accidentally, and afterward perhaps was afraid of the consequences. That was all I meant!" Then she looked up at him. "What did you think I meant?"

Each probed the other's eyes for a fear worse than his own.

"Might I ask one thing?" said Don bitterly. "Which of these killings is the one you think Donny is involved in? Battering in the head of an old woman? Or the other one?"

"You know right well the one I mean!" Mag cried. "How could he be involved in the other? Nothing on earth could justify killing that poor old creature."

Don gave a kind of laugh. "Well! You women are unbelievable. So you consider the poor girl on the docks was fair game. Bad luck if it should end as it did — bad luck for the *man*, that is to say! Tell me this," he said. "Just how did you think that anyone could be innocently implicated in a business like that? Your son, for instance!"

"I don't know!" Mag cried. "It's not fair to take me up like that. I didn't say I thought anything of the kind. I was only frightened, that's all. Any woman would be the same. You don't understand! What comes into one's mind at a time like this has nothing at all to do with the other person. It doesn't mean one thinks any the less of him. It's as if all the badness of the world, all the badness in *oneself* rushes into one's mind, and starts up a terrible reasonless fear. I know Donny is a good boy. And I know he wouldn't do any harm to anyone, but he might have been passing that gateway —"

"Down at the docks, in the middle of the night?"

"Well, how do we know what might have brought him down there? How do we know where he is any night he's out, if it comes to that? He could have been passing that way just at the wrong moment and maybe seen something. Then who knows what might have happened!"

"But you forget he came home last night. We saw him! You went up and said good night to him, like you always do!"

She said nothing for a minute.

"I didn't tell you, because it seemed silly, but it wasn't quite like always," she said then, slowly. "His light went out as I went up the stairs. He put it out, though he must have heard me coming. I hardly noticed it at the time — I thought his eyes might be giving him trouble, after so much studying all the week. He put out his hand and took the hot bottle."

"Oh, come! You're making something out of nothing, Mag. And I think, anyway, there's something you ought to get straight in your mind," Don said. "Even if he were to walk right in the door this minute. It's just possible that a young fellow like our Donny might on occasion have some truck with a girl like that poor girl that was strangled, without it being necessarily taken that he be mixed up in her murder, but he couldn't be mixed up in her murder without it necessarily being taken that he had some sort of truck with her! Get your mind clear on that!"

Mag's mind, however, had unexpectedly cleared itself not only of that but of all fear. "Oh, I'm sure we are being ridiculous!" she cried. "I'm sure there's some simple explanation." She put her hand gently on Don's arm. "If it makes you feel better, dear, go ahead and ring the police, though." But when he said nothing, she spoke still more gently. "What do you really think?" she asked.

"I don't know what to think now!" he said roughly. "You've succeeded in getting me into a fine state." He moved over and stood at the window. Then he bent forward and looked down the street. "Well, well," he said. "They didn't hang him yet, anyway; he's coming down the road!"

"Oh, thank God! Let me look. Where is he?" She ran to the window, and then, when she had seen him with her own two eyes, she ran toward the door.

"Mag!" Don's voice was so peremptory she turned back, but instantly, as their eyes met, they were at one again and could seek counsel from each other.

"What will I say to him?" she asked.

But before either of them could utter a word at all, it was Donny with his smile who spoke to them — his smile that was always so open, and with a peculiar sweetness in it. "I suppose I'm in for it!" he said. "Or did you miss me? I thought I'd be back before you were awake." When they didn't answer, he reddened slightly. "I

meant you to come down and find me as fresh as a lark." He turned to Mag. "Were you worried, Mother? I'm sorry. I'll tell you how it happened, but I hope you weren't worried."

"Well, it was mostly on account of your exam, Donny," Mag said vaguely, glancing at the pink card. "If it was an ordinary morning . . ."

Donny glanced at the card, too, and also at the clock. He went over and took up the card and put it in his pocket. "I mustn't forget this," he said. "It's a good job I came home. I'd have forgotten it. I wasn't going to come home at all but go right on to the college only for thinking about you and how you might worry."

"It was a bit late in the day to begin worrying about us then," said Don.

"I know! I know!" Donny cried. "I ought to have been home hours ago, only I got a darned blister on my heel. It hurts like hell, still. I ought to bathe my foot, but I don't suppose I've time. If it wasn't for knowing you'd have been in a state about me, I could have bathed my foot in the lavatory down at the examination hall. But then I'd have had nothing to eat, and I'm starving." Seeing some unbuttered toast, he picked it up and rammed it into his mouth.

"Oh, that toast is cold!" Mag cried. "Let me make some more."

But Don brought his fist down on the table. "Toast be damned!" he said. "Where the hell was he, that's what we want to know. Where were you? You don't seem to realize — your mother was nearly out of her mind."

"Oh, Don, what does it matter now!" cried Mag. "As long as he's back and everything's all right."

For, of course, everything was all right now. Only the absent son had been unknowable, and so capable of — well, anything. The real Donny, standing in their midst, was once more enclosed within the limits of their loving concept of him.

But Don could be so stubborn. "How are we sure everything is all right?" he said. "My God, Mag, but you have a short memory!" He turned to Donny. "Why didn't you tell your mother where you were going? You know she's a light sleeper, and you knew you needn't have been afraid of waking me — I'd never have heard you. Why didn't you do that? Why didn't you tell her what was going on?"

"Oh, Don, don't upset him," Mag said. "Look at the clock. He can tell us at supper tonight, and —"

"But there's nothing to tell!" Donny cried. "It'll sound foolish now. It would have been so different if I'd got back before you were awake. I only meant to go out for a few minutes in the first place, but the night was so fine —"

"Are you trying to tell us you just went out for a walk," Don said, "in the middle of the night?"

Missing the ironic note in his father's voice, Donny turned round eagerly. "Not a walk — I only intended getting a breath of air." He turned back to Mag. "I couldn't sleep after I went to bed. You know how it is before an exam! Well, after I was a while tossing about, I knew I'd never sleep. I knew the state I'd be in for the exam, so I got up and dressed. I thought I'd look over the books again for a bit, but then I thought I'd step outside the door and get a breath of air first. I had no idea of going for a walk — that hour of night! I only meant to stand at the door, or take a few steps down the road. But it was such a night! You've no idea. I just kept walking on and on, till I found myself nearly in Dundrum! I was actually standing on Dodder Bridge at Dundrum before I realized how far I'd walked! And there were the hills across from me when I leaned over the bridge — and somehow they seemed so near and —"

"You didn't go up the hills?" Mag cried.

"Well, as far as the Lamb Doyle's," said Donny. "I'd have liked to go on further, up by Ticknock, but it was beginning to get bright — not that it was really dark at all, but day was breaking. You should have seen the sky! I'd like to have stayed up there. But I had the old exam to think about, so I had to start coming down again. Oh, but it was great up there; I felt wonderful. I could feel my mind clearing and everything falling into place. But I don't suppose you understand?" he said, suddenly aware of their lack of comment.

"If only you'd come to my door, Son," said Mag.

"As if you'd have let me go, Mother! You know you'd have got up and come downstairs, and it would be cups of tea, and reheating jars, and remaking beds. You'd never have let me out! But that breath of air, and the exercise, was just what I needed. I felt great! But the good is well taken out of it now by all this fuss!"

he cried, looking accusingly from one to the other of them.

Mag turned to Don. "Now! What did I tell you! He could have explained everything at supper."

"Let's have no more of it, so," said Don, and he took up his briefcase. "All I'll say is, it's a pity he didn't cut short his capers by an hour or so and save us all this commotion."

"I told you I got a blister on my heel," said Donny indignantly. "I would have been back hours ago only for that."

"The blister! Oh, let me look at it!" Mag cried. "The dye of your sock might get into it. You could get an infection. We'll have to see that it's clean and put a bit of bandage on it. Sit down, Son," she said, and as he sat down she sank down on her knees in front of him as she used to do when she tied his shoelaces for school.

"Wait till you see the bandage that's on it now," said Donny. "I came down part way in my bare feet — as far as Sandyford, where the bungalows begin. But people were stirring — milkmen, bus conductors, and that class of person, going to work — and I had to put on the shoes, but I wouldn't have got far in them only I found something to pad my heel. This!" he cried, and he rolled down his sock and pulled it up — a bit of sweat-stained, blood-soaked yellow felt. "What's the matter?" he cried, as he saw Mag's face. Then he saw Don's. "What's the matter?"

Was it the texture of the cloth? Was it the color? What was it that made them know, instantly, that it had once been part of a woman's beret?

"Why are you staring at me?" he cried. He looked down at the bit of stuff. At the same time, he shoved his hand into his pocket and brought up the rest of the beret. "I felt bad about cutting it up," he said. "It looked brand-new. But I told myself that somebody's loss was my gain."

Mag and Don were staring stupidly at him.

"I suppose it wasn't all a yarn you were spinning us, was it?" asked Don at last. But he answered his own question. "I suppose it wasn't," he said dejectedly. And he walked over and took up the paper. "There's something you'd better know, boy," he said quietly. "You evidently didn't see the morning paper." He held it out to him, pointing to one paragraph only.

Donny read quickly — a line or two. "Is this it, do you think?" he asked then, with a dazed look at the bit of yellow felt.

"That's what we want to know," said Don. "Where did you get it?"

"I told you! I picked it up in the gutter, somewhere about Sandford Road. Oh, do you think this is it?" he cried again, and, letting the pieces fall, he ran his hands down the sides of his trouser legs, over and over again, as if wiping them. "Why didn't you tell me when I came in first?" he said, looking pathetically young.

But Mag began to laugh with odd, gulping laughs. "Don't mind me, Son," she said, between the gulps. "I can't help it." She didn't see the warning look Don gave her. "It's from relief," she said.

Donny looked at her. He had not missed his father's look. Ignoring her, he turned to Don. "What did she mean?"

"Nothing, boy, nothing," said Don. "We were a bit alarmed, you must realize that. You wouldn't understand, I suppose. Someday you may. Parenthood isn't easy — it induces all kinds of hysterical states in people at times. Men as well as women!" he added staunchly, taking Mag's arm and linking it with his for a minute. "I mean —" he said, but irritation got the better of him. "Anyway, you've only yourself to blame," he said. "We were beside ourselves with anxiety — ready to think anything."

Donny said nothing for a moment. "But not anything bad?" He turned to Mag. "You didn't think anything bad about me? Why, you know me all through, Mother, don't you, like — like as if I were made of glass. How could you think anything bad about me?"

"Oh, of course I couldn't!" Mag cried, and she longed to deny everything — words, thoughts, feelings, everything — but all she could do was show contrition. "I was nearly crazy, Donny! You don't understand."

"You're right there!" he said. He slumped down on a chair. After a minute, apathetically he began to pull on his sock over his grimy foot. "I'd better go to my exam," he said.

"Your exam!" Don shouted. "Are you joking? Well, let me tell you, you can kiss goodbye to your exam. Don't you know you'll have to account for that beret being in your possession, you young fool? You don't think you can walk into the house with a thing like that — like a dog'd drag in a bone — and when you've dropped it at our feet walk off, unconcerned, about your business?" Suddenly Don, too, slumped down on a chair. "If you were safe in

your bed where you belonged, we'd have been spared all this shame and humiliation."

"Shamel" Mag said. "Humiliation?"

Don gave her a withering look. "We'll be a nice laughingstock!" he said. "I can just see them reading about this in the office." He looked at Donny. "And your pals in the university will have many a good snigger at you, too. To say nothing of what view the university authorities may take of it. And they might be nearer the mark. It's not such a laughing matter at all. It's no joke being implicated in a thing like this. There's no end to the echoes a thing like this could have — all through your life! People have queer twisted memories. They'll never remember that you were innocent; they'll only remember that you had something to do with it. I'd take my oath that from this day you're liable to be pointed out as the fellow that had something to do with the murder of a woman." In malice he turned to Mag. "They'll probably get things mixed up, seeing they were both the same night, and think it was the other murder he was involved in!"

Donny didn't catch the last reference. He was thinking over what Don had first said. "God help innocence if everyone is as good at distorting things as you!" he said angrily.

"Well, it's no harm for you to be shown what can be done in that line," Don said. "I'd be prepared to swear you'll want your wits about you when you're telling the police about it. They'll need a lot of convincing before they believe in your innocence — or your foolishness, as I'd be more inclined to call it. It isn't as if you only saw the thing, or picked it up and hung it on the spike of a railing, as many a one would have done — as I'd have done, if it was me! Or even as if you picked it up and put it in your pocket and forgot about it, as maybe another might have done. But oh, no! You had to cut it up in pieces! How will *that* appear in the eyes of the police? And I must say I wouldn't like to be you when it comes to telling them about the blister on your heel! Those fellows have feet of cast iron. You couldn't blister them with a firing iron! I tell you, you'll wear out the tongue in your head before you'll satisfy those fellows about this. Oh, how did it happen to us!"

Mag ran over to him. "Don! I can't understand you!" she cried. "You didn't take on this bad when we thought —"

Don glared at her. "It wasn't me thought it but you!" he cried. "And if it was now, I'd know better what to think. He's only a fool — that's clear."

But Donny stood up. "I may be a fool, but I'm not one all the way through," he said quietly, calmly. "How is anyone to know about this? It was hardly light when I picked it up. There wasn't a soul in sight. Why should I go out of my way to tell about it? It was up to the police to find it, anyway. Isn't that what they're paid for? Whose fault is it if they don't do their job properly? That whole vicinity must have been full of them last night, with flash-lights and car lights and the rest of it. If the beret was so important, why didn't they make it their business to find it? Why was it left for me? And why should I neglect my business because they don't do their business right? I'm going out to my exam!"

"Oh, but Son," cried Mag, "you could call at the station — or phone them! Yes, that would be quicker — phone them. And tell them you found the beret but that you had to go to your exam."

Donny sneered. "A lot they'd care about my exam. They'd keep me half the day questioning me, like Dad said."

"Not if you explained, Son," Mag said. "You could say you'd be available in the afternoon."

"As if they'd wait till then for their information, Mother! And if you think they would be prepared to wait till then, what's the need in my rushing to them now? No — I'm going to the exam."

"Oh, Son! Time might be of the greatest importance! Even if you were to miss your exam — think of what this might mean. It might lead to their finding whoever did it!"

Don had said nothing for some minutes. "It could lead them astray as easily," he said then. "I know them. They could lose more time probing Donny than it would take to find twenty murderers. It might not be a bad idea, Mag, for him to do as he says — keep his mouth shut!" He stooped and picked up the two pieces of felt and stared at them.

Donny put out his hand. "Give them to me, anyway," he said. "I've got to go." Absently, he fitted the two pieces together, till they made a whole. "I'll see later what I'll do," he said. Then he looked Don in the face. "But I think I know already," he said.

Hastily, Don took up his briefcase again. "I'll be down the

street with you, Son," he said. "We have to consider this from every angle." At the door, he turned. "Are you all right, Mag?" he asked.

Mag wasn't looking at him. She was looking at Donny.

"Don't look at me like that, Mother!" cried Donny. "Nobody's made of glass, anyway. Nobody!"

CONFUSIONS

BY JACK LUDWIG

I *SING CONFUSION*, I, Joseph Gillis, myself confused, or, to put it another way, an American: biologically and intellectually

I'm a sport: washed-out, gray-eyed, colorless, Anglo-Saxon pale-face son of a swarthy, squat, burning-eyed Chassidic father, a mother so Semitic she's often mistaken for an Arab, I'm all Harvard, A.B., A.M., PH.D., thesis *Iconography in the Later Novels of Charles Dickens* which in the interests of letters and learning Harvard University Press published at a cost of only \$680 to me and my father, Simon Galsky, who ekes out a living from a small bakery in Roxbury and never went to school a day in his life. Loyalty to Pa made me change my name so we wouldn't have to look at "Galsky" inscribed on a Harvard degree in Latin: changing names, as everyone knows, is an important part of my religious tradition: Abram's name changed to Abraham, Jacob's to Israel, and we Jews have been changing names religiously ever since. Like my best friend Gabe Pulford, son of Roxbury's best-known sage, poet, wit, and disposer of goods damaged by fire or flood, A. I. Polonsky. A. I. also went into partnership with Harvard University Press *ad hoc*, his \$680 giving them the necessary push to get out Gabe's thesis, *Polyphonic Structure in the Later Novels of George Eliot* (we Harvards like to see Yales and Princetons write about Early novels).

Being second-generation Jews, Gabe and I felt at home at Harvard immediately; in our Jewish bones we recorded it as a ghetto, or a small Russian town like the *shtetl* Pa was born in, Krivorog. Talk about provincial! Several Harvard instructors have never

crossed the Charles River into Boston: one of them claimed he'd never been on the *other* side of Mass Avenue! Even the setting was a ghetto — the walls around the Harvard Yard, the few hundred feet of path we crossed and recrossed day in, day out, seeing the same faces wearing the same expressions and making the same observations — life exactly as Pa nostalgically describes it in Krivorog.

In my Harvard House, Pinkham, swaddled in J. Press's and Chipp's Ivy Issue, I became interchangeable with Oyster Bay elegants, Chicago Poles, Milwaukee brewers' sons, spending seven long years, till now I look like a Lowell, sound like a Cabot, though deep deep down, as only Gabe Pulford and I know, Joseph Gillis is all Menashe Skulnik. I don't like to blame Harvard, but in a sense my education has been a flop, since after seven years of learning tact, manners, sophistication, restraint, I still don't mistrust my intuitions. So if a donnish gent dedicated to Dean Howells says "Gillis, truthfully now, what do you think of me?" I answer without hesitation, "Sir, you are a creep," and then expect him to honor me for my directness, honesty, and high standards.

I'm most confused because when I was Joey Galsky I wanted desperately to be Joseph Gillis, but now that I'm Joseph Gillis I'd give anything if I could get back to being Joey Galsky. I've tried. I imitated my old Roxbury Yiddish intonation, how I'd sound if I had stayed normal and never gone to Harvard. My liberal academic friends couldn't stand the change: Kensington Pews III, an Oyster Bay boy who came late to I. L. Peretz, took me aside: "Joe," he said sadly, "knock it off. *Commentary* taught me all about Jewish self-hatred. You're too big a guy for it." I tried to cover my Lowell face with a fine though itchy Chassidic beard, but Gabe stopped that: "You want to look ascetic but you end up looking beat, a *lumpen*-existentialist." Even the Jews at Pa's Chassidic Synagogue spurned me, moving their ancient prayer shawls away from my Ivy flannel, treating me as if I were a Gentile from Harvard's Divinity School trying to scrounge a cheap master's thesis on Judaism.

Galsky, Gillis — I live by a new injunction: "Know thyselfes." Confusion? It's more like schizophrenia. But then look at the superego I pack around with me — Pa, God, the Chassidic movement with Martin Buber thrown in, Harvard College, the New Critics, Brooks Brothers, the late Alfred Kinsey. I date the beginning of one source of confusion to my thirteenth year. In April I

was Bar Mitzvah, introduced formally to God and the Chassidic elders at Roxbury's Orthodox Synagogue: I walked around in a mystic trance tearful with reverence and piety. I was formally a Jew, a man — but there was the rub, for in May, only a month later, I felt in quite another way what being a man could be like.

In May I visited my Aunt Bess's maid Olive, a Welsh girl of great warmth and stupid placidity, with a disconcerting habit of hitching her skirts way above her knees and scratching. Piety fled.

Except that suddenly my Aunt Bess, who was supposed to be downtown, wasn't: she slammed into the room, screamed, swung her fist at me. I ducked, and ducking fell off Olive, and the couch, while Olive, instead of crying, broke into hysterical laughter — I had forgotten to take off my argyle knee sox.

"You bitch, what are you doing to my nephew?" Bess, a great one for irrelevant questions, hollered. "Out of this house at once, you bitch!"

Meanwhile I was dressing.

I felt guilty, but also denied, piqued at Bess for not having the decency, if she were going to bust in, to wait another few minutes at least.

It was my turn.

"You, my nephew, a religious hypocrite," she shouted. "Wait till Ma hears!"

Olive, still naked, held her head to one side, interested. Bess shoved her through the door, motioned to me to dress quicker. In a late fit of modesty I turned my back to tuck in my shirt.

Like a successful press-ganger Bess marched me home, swung open the front door, shoved me in ahead of her, planted herself before my mother Miriam who, unfortunately for Bess, had a sewing customer pinned for a try-on, one Mrs Gilfix, a perspiring tun of lady for whom a try-on Ma said was as tough a job as papering a wall. Bess almost exploded waiting.

"Get rid of that slob, Miriam," she whispered in Ma's ear.

"What are you shooshking about?" Ma said, giving Bess, then me, a quick look. "You don't know life has made me deaf? And Joey, *boychick*, get outside and play. This is no day for inside."

"Exactly!" said Bess.

My mother walked around Mrs Gilfix like a watchman circling a great building. Bess stalked after her.

"Get her out of here," she whispered angrily. "You should know. Your Joey and my shikseh Olivel" Bess made a few mime motions which, seen in public, would have been banned in our Boston.

My mother, a terrific lip-reader, looked blank.

Bess almost leaped at Mrs Gilfix.

"Please, lady, go in the next room and cool yourself," she said nastily. "I got here an emergency."

My mother sat down in her chair.

"Bess, sit here and help me *tzetrenn*" (meaning "unravel") "Mrs Gilfix's flowered sheer."

"Joey did enough *tzetrenning*" (meaning, in Yiddish cant, "laying") "to last this family one day," Bess came back, fixing me with her righteous eye.

Ma looked critical.

"Bess, when you bite off thread, don't slobber," she advised.

"Listen here," Bess burst out, "don't you understand, dumbell? Your Joey, and that *nafkeh* Olive, together, on my new brocade couch!"

"My Joey?" Ma said mildly. "Not my Joey."

"I saw with my own eyes," Bess wailed.

"If I don't get Mrs Gilfix unpinned the poor fat dear will go rancid," Ma said with the finality of a judge closing court.

Bess threw up her arms and was silent.

Vindicated by my mother's faith in me, I ran outside to join the other children playing kick-the-can.

Yiddish, iddish — in two words that's the story of my thirteenth year, and in a way, of my life. I have always respected my elders, but my ego keeps elbowing, to say nothing of my lousy id! A lot it cares about anything as long as *it's* healthy.

"Know thyselfes!" is not easy. Gillis wants to be of the world, Galsky to call it quits. In my social schizophrenia I don't want to play the game, yet I want to win. My spirit's confusion is even more drastic: I know I believe in God though I've broken some of his more explicit commandments: I contemplate the meaning of death while acting out each day on the assumption I've been guaranteed eternity. Like you I'm involved in the great project of murdering each twenty-four-hour day, the characteristic American enterprise. Visualize it: we (ugh) sprinkle chickenshit over the soul, rise bright and early to have time enough to murder a long day!

So much to squabbles, so much to boring blab, so much to institutional routines, so much to reducing all human possibility and complexity to a few banal psychological clichés, so much to carping, to bitching, to snarling, to lamenting, twenty-four hours ground into a mass for each day's garburator! If I didn't know my own confusions I'd get righteous as Aldous Huxley and really let humanity have it!

But I know myself. God taught one self compassion, but the Devil taught the other to throw stones. Sometimes I get ready to pitch a rock, only to remind me, us, that Gillis lives in a glass house. Often I think to myself, "If you seem to the world, like the others, a son-of-a-bitch but actually have a compassionate heart, why not grant the same possibility to these other bloody sons-of-bitches you meet daily in the vale of tears?" My logic and humanity overwhelm me. I feel terrible, cry a tear or two. Till I run into another time-murdering bastard. Then I change back into Alceste in Wonderland.

My understanding of Gillis-Galsky has been helped to some degree by marriage to a Radcliffe girl, née Nancy Framingham, a confused girl who is as Anglo-Saxon as I look, Puritan (she had a reputation in Mystic, Connecticut, her home town, of drawing the shades when she changed shoes), of an old New England whaling and trading family, a beautiful redheaded girl with gorgeous skin, high color, lovely body, and epic resolve to uplift humanity which, I have concluded from observation, means, largely, me. Nancy turned Jewish to satisfy my parents, and because, in her heart, she knew it was the honorable thing for any earnest Unitarian to do. My marriage wasn't much of a shock to my father Simon and my mother Miriam, who had already absorbed plenty from looking across a dining table in search of a wild-eyed, dark-haired, scripture-quoting Chassidic son, and seeing, instead, me.

I met Nancy at a concert of ancient instruments. She played the lute. In my bed that night we made love and talked Jane Harrison — Radcliffe girls are like that. Sex in their minds is somehow related to culture. Or maybe it was the influence of my book-lined room at Pinkham.

Harvard writing courses have now taught me to sound detached about women, but let me tell you the truth — I went wild over Nancy Framingham. I loved her with an excitement that belied my

colorless face and manners. I loved her gorgeous green eyes all flecked with rust and yellow, her full cheeks freckled and flushed, her great generous mouth and unbelievably soft liquid lips, her great long ears that seemed tiny under the coppery hair she wore in Radcliffe bangs. For once in my life I wasn't confused, only crazy.

Nancy loved me too.

She found me so interesting a person she took to observing me. Before we were married she had her ancient instruments, but once we were wed Nancy laid down her lute and took to fingering me. Through her I've grown aware of my limitless failings, though I should say in a kind of footnote that candor like Nancy's is highly overrated: for one whole year daily she has told me the truth about myself, and for the life of me I can't see how I've improved. One trouble is that I'm not as given to guilt as the Puritans Nancy's most familiar with. True American guilt has to be felt for things you are powerless to control, and the Joey Galsky in me thinks that's plain *meshigeh* — Americans are supposed to feel guilty because they don't come from a long line of other Americans, or because they're not in the Social Register: women feel guilty because their breasts are too small, men worry about the size of their penises, their height, their strength, their thickness. I tell Nancy it's narcissistic to feel guilty: she says it's narcissistic *not* to feel guilty: many of our discussions end thus, moot.

When Nancy played the lute she was ambitious, but now her aspirations have shifted to me. "Joe," she often says, "a nasty-mouthed son-of-a-bitch like you should become a satirist. Why don't you knock off this horseshit about compassion and really let the bastard in you loose?" (Her language, which she says I should feel guilty about her learning since it's pure Roxbury toughs' talk, still shocks me.)

Nancy's greatest ambition is to make me humble, which she thinks social life will accomplish most quickly. We go to Deans' teas, students' dinners, faculty parties — you know the stuff: stale jokes, names that are cracked from being dropped so clumsily, charades, all the bourgeois forms of entertainment a nice Roxbury Jewish boy knows nothing about. We get home from a party and Nancy wears her improving look:

"Sweetie," she says, "that wasn't so bad, now, was it? You have

to be tolerant, eh, hon — not expect so much from this corrupt little world.”

“Shit,” I say.

“Let’s have the Smiths back next week, huh, darling?”

“Balls!” I holler. “What kind of bloody system is it that says because a guy bores you in *his* house you invite him back so he can bore you in *your* house!”

Huffily she tells me either I live in the world or I don’t, and the Gillis-Galsky voices agree that’s a fair alternative.

Her desire to re-do me takes drastic forms. A couple of winters ago I went skiing in Cambridge, nothing for a confused man to do: results — a broken leg, cracked collarbone, mild concussion, part of me in a plaster cast, my arm in a sling, the pain so bad I was kept loaded with morphine. On such a night as this, Tim Jolliffe, one of Nancy’s New England guilt-sharers, a kamikaze pilot sleuthing for pact-makers, a cry-baby whose apartment looks like a hobby shop for hypochondriacs, dropped in to reflect vocally on his most current form of self-annihilation (it’s guys with the terrifying consistency of Jolliffe who make me so thankful I’m confused). Nancy felt I should show Tim he was welcome. She woke me. I groaned.

“It’s Tim, sweetie,” she said softly. I groaned twice more.

I couldn’t see Tim through the morphine fog before my eyes, but I could hear him sniff. He blew his nose, sank down at the foot of my bed with a jarring thud that sent the pain shooting through my limbs.

“Whew, one hell of a cold I’ve got, Joe. Don’t get too close to me.”

He didn’t seem to notice the change in me, possibly because the affected parts were hidden by a cast and a sling.

Tim is very handsome, and one of the most brilliant guys I’ve ever met, a Greek scholar, a wit, a man of elegance and style, but monorailed, fixated, afraid of drafts, dirt, germs, radiation, a collector of evidence to prove this the worst of all possible worlds. When I’m not in a cast (because I really like the neurotic son-of-a-bitch in spite of his whining) I collect disaster stories to jolly Tim along with, act depressed so he’ll think I’m worth his spending time with me: I tell him the latest on how DDT kills *good* bugs and plants,

how it poisons our systems, how people get cancer from drinking milk in wax containers, how can-openers fill our tinned soups with metal shavings.

To Tim Jolliffe only despair is normal: anybody who isn't depressed Tim assumes is faking. This particular night the morphine had a salutary effect because Tim for once was satisfied with my expression.

Nancy was still a little nervous Tim might feel he was intruding.

"Timmy," she said in her snuggly voice, "Joe and I love people to drop in like this."

"A chill," Tim said tragically, ducking his fine face into his chest and shivering. "I've got a terrible chill."

"What can I get you, Timmy doll?" Nancy smacked up against the bed in her eagerness, and I was close to fainting.

"Hot milk," Tim said bravely.

"Joe," Nancy jogged my unslung arm, "amuse him. Can't you see he's upset?"

Morphine always numbs my jaws. I tried to say something uplifting. The words didn't make it out.

"Nanckie," Jolliffe called to her as she disappeared into the kitchen, "could you put in a pat of butter?"

"Love to!"

"My sinuses are bad too, hon," Tim called after her. "Joe here doesn't seem much interested in how I am."

"You know Joe," Nancy said loyally.

She brought him his hot milk which he blew on and sipped pensively, punctuating the Gestalt with a few Method-style chills.

My head drooped, my eyes began to close. Nancy shook me awake.

"Don't ignore him," she whispered. "He must have something big to tell us."

Jolliffe is fifteen years older than I am; many times I've been struck by the plausible thought: whom did he bitch to before I was born?

"Nanckie, may I be frank?" Tim said after a long moment of bearable silence. "First get me another hot milk — with butter, huh, dear?"

"Keep him talking, Joe," Nancy said as she whirled out the room,

deeply moved by signs of sex and feeling in a fellow New Englander.

"Be frank, Tim," I tried to get out of my numb lips.

"Why are you so hostile?" he said angrily. Nancy scowled at me as she handed Tim his second glass.

"It's a girl," Tim began, "a nurse from Boston. I undressed her."

Nancy flushed with pleasure at New England scoring a point. As for me, I was too worn out to figure if that undressing bit was a circumlocution for something better, or a mere fetish.

"She's pretty," Tim said, "or I think so. Maybe Joe here won't," he added accusingly.

"To hell with what Joe thinks," Nancy said, turning her back on me.

Tim coughed like a female impersonator doing Camille, looked pleadingly at Nancy, held out his glass for a refill. Just half an hour earlier she'd bitched mightily because I'd asked her for a fresh glass of water to help wash down my pills: now she beamed.

"Whether you think the nurse is pretty or not doesn't cut much ice with me, Joe," Tim said coldly. "I may marry her."

Nancy held the full glass and let Jolliffe sip.

"Only," his voice dropped, "there's a second girl. She's Catholic. Her maternal grandfather, though," Jolliffe looked at me as if it were my fault, "was a Jew."

That didn't surprise me: from reading *The New Yorker* I'd concluded everybody's grandmother or grandfather was a Jew.

"It's hard, dreadfully hard, a dilemma, a tragedy of choice . . ."

"I know, Timmy," Nancy said. If I weren't familiar with Tim's habit of making a shotgun situation out of bumping against a girl's breasts on a crowded subway, I might have rallied my jaws to the cause of sympathy.

Thus the night passed — marry the nurse, marry the Catholic girl with the Jewish grandfather, Tim permuted and combined all the impossibilities. At six A.M. the morphine was all gone, and me half; sunlight streamed into the room, making sleep impossible. Jolliffe, soggy with hot milk, squinted happily in the bright glare and thanked Nancy for her hospitality and understanding. Me he gave a dirty look.

"You're some guy, Joe. I've been here seven, almost eight hours, and did you once say a word about my sinuses?"

Nancy grades me on such performances. I get so much for de-

portment, for interest, sympathy, involvement, commitment — the good categories; with points deducted for cracks, sneers, snarls, innuendo, mocking, jesuitical debate tactics, one-upmanship, raucous laughter, the use of “balls,” “Jeheezuz,” or any similar registers of dismay or discomfort.

“Nancy,” I protest after one of Jolliffe’s women-and-whine sessions, “that murder of the twenty-four-hour day you’ve heard me preach about. Tim’s Number One killer. He knows everything. He can talk about Sophocles, Plato, Aristophanes — why the chicken-shit?”

“You lack the finer sensibilities,” she comes back — by which she means plain old guilt.

The guy I blame for much of my trouble is David Riesman, not for the reason you may think — that I aspire to be a novelist which Lionel Trilling says I can’t be since David Riesman does what novelists should do but don’t, and better too. No. It’s that “inner-directed” and “other-directed” kick which Nancy, being Radcliffe, cottoned to early.

“Piggish inner-direction, that’s what makes you impossible socially,” she often says in a tone which sounds to me like hate but which she explains is a combination of love and unrequited expectation. I protest that I *seem* inner-directed only because the “others” that direct me are either losers or far away: God’s in his heaven, Pa’s in Roxbury, Harvard College is too complicated for people to see the terrible effect it has on its sons: Chassidism and Martin Buber are too serious for people to take serious, the New Critics have become Old Scholars.

“Baby,” I say, giving her a hot hug, “knock off the analysis and let’s inter-act a little.”

Actually I’m a Walter Mitty of other-direction: I tried to back into being Hemingway by writing and talking as if I were translating literally from bad Portuguese: I stored bullets for biting, in case I had to have an operation without anesthetic: I wanted to be ignorant and called Nick: I fished the Charles River for marlin, prowled Dedham in search of a tiger, went to a Zionist Camp so I could sleep in a two-person bag and call the girl counselors “Pilar.” I grew my first beard but sadly came out not Hemingway but Ezra Pound.

Then I turned Faulkner. Gone were monosyllables and simple

sentences. Every time I used a period in a paragraph I felt like a failure: my Cabot "Haavaad" was lost to a soft "Miz Sippi" and terse "B'loxi"; I had a nightmare about not knowing the correct answer to "Why do you hate the South?"; I wrote a bad imitation of "The Bear," about a Roxbury southern lady called Bessie Mothers.

Leslie Fiedler other-directed me so thoroughly that while doing the real lowdown on Othello and Iago I stopped to dash off "The Strip and the Stripes," which Mr Fiedler has predicted will be the definitive study of *Little Black Sambo*. Under Stanley Edgar Hyman's direction I have discovered Isis in the least likely of places. Another great critic had such a terrific effect on me I almost went out and formed a book club.

And magazines! I can't write anything for *The New Yorker* that doesn't begin: "Years ago in Roxbury, Massachusetts, my grandmother, a fun-loving soul of eighty-two, was crazy for fire horses, which she chased successfully during lulls in her regular jobs, steeplejacking and feeding the lion in the Roxbury zoo." All my *Partisan-Review*-directed stuff makes smashingly crucial distinctions between Europe and America, men and women, now and then: my characters are always ex-Communists, lay analysts, college girls, douche bags, journal-keeping mamas, and my style, no matter what, ends up full Henry James. For *Playboy* I skid with Jags and MG's, chase skinny but soulful models, my men characters Chipped, Pressed, unconfidently horny and cynical, while for *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, whether my voice is Barbara Ward's, Bertrand Russell's, or even Rebecca West's, I come out constructive constructive constructive. Why, doesn't Nancy herself other-direct me? I conclude a book I'm reviewing is lousy but because of Nancy's candor put fifty per cent of my opinion down to bad character, which means the book isn't that lousy any more, which means my review now is.

I wasn't born for the golden mean.

I turned myself over to the Johnson O'Connor Human Engineering labs for clarification — my aptitudes were as schizophrenic as the rest of my confusion: I came out high for making planes fly, conducting a symphony orchestra, doing brain surgery, writing advertising copy and other fiction, being a psychoanalyst, all metaphors for the one thing I was doing for a living — teaching. In

my confusion I turned to the three biggest men in Harvard's yard, the campus floorwalker who could tell me where everything was, the campus ward-heeler who could tell me how to get it, the campus brain-picker who would get it from me after I got it. They told me to apply for a Fulbright with its year of quiet rest.

Gillis, Galsky, who am I, what am I? I asked myself one afternoon as I fretted over a necktie in the Harvard Co-op. Gillis, being colorless, goes for flash; Galsky is a charcoal-lover.

"Never ask who you are," a suave Boston voice answered.

I almost jumped out of my skin.

A man dressed in the impeccable Ivy fashion I recognize as mid-western stared at me through heavy horn-rim spectacles. He was wearing a brown and yellow madras jacket, olive bermudas, black knee sox, Italian loafers — the usual.

"Excuse me, sir," I finally had strength enough to get out, "did you say something?"

"I was talking to Gillis, not Galsky," he said softly.

I shook my head to clear the apparition away. What the hell! I thought. Is my confusion leading to real trouble?

"No," the man said. "Your confusion is normal."

This time I nearly hurdled the Co-op display of green bags.

"Why don't you listen to Nancy?" he said, steering me out of the store and, before I could pull away, into a Brattle Street teashop.

"Who in hell are you?" I said as I sank down next to an éclair.

"Exactly," he said significantly.

"Where's your tail?" I blurted out. "Your horns? Your cloven hoof?"

"Naïve boy," he mocked. "Do you think Jesus Christ looks anything like the mezzotint lad the teetotaling societies push?"

Gillis-Galsky, I addressed myself sternly, you're a twentieth-century man, a Harvard man, a skeptic, even a cynic: that Chassidic stuff has gone to your head. You're plain nuts. The guy's a looney: when they feel saintly they pretend they're deans, when nasty it's devils.

"I'm a busy — er, ahem," the man interrupted my thought. "Figure me out on your own time, later. I'm here on business. Do you or do you not want to be a successful writer?"

What's it to him? I thought.

"Plenty," he came back with immediately, "plenty. Nancy is right. You have the stuff, but you're stuck with that fake compassion line. Get rid of it. Stop blinding yourself to the worst in human nature. Listen, Gillis," he stood up and made passes at the air over my head, "I'll make you the male Ladies' Home Juvenal, male chief of the Meow-Meow Tribe! We'll be a team, Gillis. I've a file on every false bosom, bottom, eyelash, accent in this world. My index lists tics for you, wens, warts, cockeyes. Together, Gillis, we'll expose this creation."

Luther, I suddenly remembered, prescribed swearing as a way of handling devils.

"Please behave in a manner befitting the Ivy clothes on our backs," the man said sharply.

The swearing stuck in my throat.

"With all Harvard to choose from, Gillis, I chose you; it's your freedom from guilt."

I wondered if he'd spent much time with Nancy.

"The technique for success is simple," he said, pushing his pale face closer to mine. "*You* are the norm. *You* are always right."

Now I *knew* he'd been talking to Nancy!

"You expose," he said.

"Who?"

"Mankind, the creation, everybody!"

"Why?"

"You're a disappointed idealist. You hoped for the best and recognized the worst. Life is agony — that's our message, Gillis, though we jive it up a bit for campus consumption."

I had bear stew at Chez Dreyfus, I suddenly remembered: bear stew is what is making me see devils.

"Bear stew be damned. Concentrate," the man ordered. "We'll prove men are weak, women unfeeling and cold. Passion is glandular, friendship queer, compassion a cover-up. Your eye will see cobwebs on Cellinis, cracks in Michelangelo's marbles. I'll teach you to sell out your best friend —"

"Gabe Pulford?"

"Gabe Pulford — your own grandmother too. You'll learn to be an elegant crook, voyeur, eavesdropper —"

"But why, Devil?" I gave him his due. "For what?"

"Because you have something elevating to say about life and morality, Gillis! Now do you see? Don't answer yet. I'll check with you later."

He disappeared.

I ran outside to see where he'd gone and almost bumped into an old straggly-bearded Jew in a black kaftan hurrying through crowds of students oblivious of everything and everyone. Without looking for cars and trucks right or left, he dashed across Brattle Street. A learned old man would tell me about devils, I thought, and took after him. I would throw myself at his feet, ask for guidance, instruction, even conversion (if being Gillis called for it). I imagined kneeling at the old man's side, being blessed, having the face of my super-ego which he wore change from justice to mercy.

But suddenly, out of a doorway, stepped an Italian girl of fantastic loveliness, her dark hair swinging loosely down her back, her hips rolling, her calves flashing flesh. I gulped, I swallowed, and in that time the old man disappeared.

The devil had proved me more iddish than Yiddish! *Superegos of Galsky unite!* I wanted to shout over Brattle Street: *You have nothing to lose but Gillis!*

The old man was nowhere to be seen. I took bitter consolation from the thought that had I caught up with him we couldn't have had much of a conversation: my Hebrew is lousy.

Arrogance, I thought as I wandered back to the Harvard Yard, arrogance and pride make for devils. Man creates devils in his own image. I kept hearing the devil's voice in my ears: no wonder it sounded so familiar. It was my own. The devil was just the worst *me*. Did that mean there were now three "me's"? Didn't two make a big enough crowd? Perhaps seeing devils meant I was being other-directed now by Goethe and Thomas Mann? Doesn't every dreaming man go through phases when he's a Faust or a Don Giovanni?

Boy, I thought as I passed into Widener Library, if my pals in the Behavioral Sciences ever get hold of this nonsense, they'll rate me on their scales next to Whittaker Chambers.

But wait, don't get the idea that I'm telling you about the Gillis-Galsky confusion because it's unique. This confusion I sing is yours too. Harvard's. America's. This world's.

As a young boy I'd heard of Harvard's famous archaeologist, Condor Pisk, as the "Renan of the Twentieth Century," but a few years ago I met him in the flesh, all of it, for Condor is a believer in Swedish exercises and punishes himself severely with his daily routines. I met him in the Harvard gym, or I should say, heard him, counting, in a high nasal goatlike voice which I assume he got from Egyptians in whose country he's done most of his digging. I had been swimming underwater. The shock was immediate: I'd never heard anything like his voice outside a mosque.

I looked around.

Up in the bleachers, against the dull gray of cement, Condor Pisk's reddish buttocks made a huge bifurcated target above which his legs rotated slowly. From time to time his back collapsed and the arse came down on cement with a wet splat. My first reaction was to think of all the pretentious sons-of-bitches I would like to see in the exact position this guy was assuming (a good dose of bad feeling, I've found, renews you as much as love itself). When Condor finally went right side up, his face almost black, he began thrashing his arms around wildly, gave a few nasal crows, and with his feet together bounded like a bunny from tier to tier down and out to the locker rooms.

I followed, thinking if this was some new form of religion, I'd like to be one of the first to hear about it.

"Walking," he said when I caught up with him, "is all wrong. Kills our arches."

Apologetically I tried a few hops for size. They weren't mine.

Still naked, rubbing himself savagely with a rough towel, Condor puffed on a meerschaum that sizzled with dampness. I waved my arms half-heartedly so he'd get the impression I too was involved in self-improvement.

"Gillis," he said after I'd introduced myself, "do you know The New Science? Are you 'clear'?"

I shook my head.

"Dianetics," Condor said enthusiastically. "It's as significant as the arch and the wheel."

I continued to look blank.

The "Renan of the Twentieth Century" had just made some fantastic discoveries in Egypt: I wanted him to talk about that. He dismissed archaeology with a wave of his hand.

"You are not clear of engrams," he said significantly. "You should be audited. My wife is an auditor. You're married? My wife will teach yours to be an auditor. They'll be in on the ground floor. All America will beat a path to the door of the good auditor."

I liked that idea. Nancy, because the atmosphere at Radcliffe is so fey, doesn't know much about where money comes from or where it goes; Radcliffes don't go much beyond the idea that money is what you have in the here and now. A practical course in auditing would be the ticket to reality. I immediately thought up ways of selling the idea: figures were Arabic, eastern, occult. Numbers were Kabbalistic, Pythagorean, mystic, weird, old.

"When fully audited and clear," Condor said significantly, "our memories antedate conception."

I tried to get him back to the course in auditing.

"Freud's imprecision," he said through his wonderful flap of a nose, "we have bypassed it. Auditing established a one-to-one connection between the past and present. Science, Gillis, has taken over from Freud's romance and speculation. You're in English, I take it. Once 'clear,' you'll be able to recite *Paradise Lost* without a pause."

Still talking dianetics, he dressed himself, stood before me in baggy tweeds and unpolished shoes, an old prof to anybody's eyes, that typical, that harmless, that irrelevant.

"I'm being audited by my wife right now," he said confidentially. "In time — perhaps this week — I hope to pass into my conceptive spermatozoa and back into my father and so back through the ages, Gillis, reversing clock and calendar. In this way," he pulled his meerschaum out of his mouth, looked me straight in the eye as if he were applying to become a member of my superego board, "I hope to write what will turn out to be the first eyewitness account of *all man's history!*"

On Condor Pisk I didn't look like such a great confusion. Here was a perfect example of man's confused but beautiful compartmentalization! Being a great Egyptologist won't save a man from also being a great loony. If I had brought Condor Pisk an Egyptological theory as wacky as dianetics is to psychology he would have thrown me out of his office as a crackpot.

Just Pisk? What about Gustavus Wing of Physics, a man who worked with Einstein and Von Neumann at Princeton, what should we say about Wing's charming schizophrenia, this scientific genius crusading for maximum consumption of bone marrow to enhance the efficiency of eyeballs, and others? What should we say about Hyman Borscht, the people's wit and philosopher, deeply dedicated with thousands of other followers of the original Looney, Joseph, to prove Shakespeare Oxford, or Bacon? Or that fearless literary critic, Gimpel Benish Taylor, who acts as if a sheet of glass were needed between him and other mortals and lives in dreadful fear of other men's germs?

Confusion is what makes not only our heads go round, but the world too. In thought it often comes out *pluralism*. In action it's frequently called *versatility*. Or *flexibility*. In justifying my own confusion I know I push a little, but if the opposite of confusion is ideological consistency, who can blame me? I offer you a vision:

I am confused, therefore I am.

Nothing, to the confused, stands still: the world is ever various, in the process of being almost wrecked or newly created. Six months after I'd run into Condor Pisk at the Harvard gym I bumped into him hurrying across the Harvard Yard, a beautiful bow in one hand, strapped to his back a leather quiver full of arrows. Only his meerschaum disturbed the association with Cupid. To show the influence of Dale Carnegie even at the Harvard level, I asked with enthusiastic concern about dianetics.

"Dianetics, dear boy," he said with a smile, as if I'd come forward with the idea the world was flat, "dianetics is one of the great absurdities of all time. I'd love to discuss it with you, old chap, but I'm late for my Zen class. Why don't you join? Why don't you get your wife to join? I spend all my spare time learning how to hold this bow and arrow according to Zen principles. Peace be with you. And give up that dianetics talk. People who aren't tolerant of foolishness might blacken your reputation in the Yard."

He hurried off, the world forever the poorer because Condor Pisk will never write his much awaited eyewitness account of all history. But I have barely begun to sing you of confusion.

Epilogue

CHANGE OF LIVES

Why have I told you all this? Why else, you confused guilt-ridden son-of-a-bitch, than to make you change your life! If publishing costs were lower, I'd publish this heroic tale of mine in two colors — gray, to show how, furtive as you, I faked being monolithic (like you): *pink*, *ruddy*, to show me now, healthy from having bared my confusions!

I say it again — *change your life!* Just look at that hopeless existence you pretend you *must* lead — “I’m a man with a family”; “It’s O.K. to have principles, but a chap has to eat.” Why, man, such piss-poor slogans to explain your burial in chickenshit! Soul-selling to perpetuate a toenailhold in a laundry? Dante lived, and Rabelais lived — and Homer and Sophocles and Shakespeare and Cervantes — so *you*, you creep, should come to be *this*, a guy who murders his own soul because the institutional world expects it of him? And you, Beatnik mine, what’s this life you are murdering, a memorial to chickenshit too? You howl but I hear whine: style, man, style is needed: lift up that sour kisser and deliver yourself as a man of this world: if the world were to be annihilated tomorrow, is that any reason for you acting this way *today*? What you can change, man, change: what you can’t don’t dribble over. Values, goals, rules — here, I tell all:

desire nothing in this world but time to do your work, love, kisses, serious talk, great works of art, laughter, and a white Jaguar so you can get to these things more quickly.

Till my eyes opened I, like you, lived on the great American assumption that, like the cat, I had at least nine lives — eight to murder, then one to create. I, like you, bleated my sad fate, not my poor place in Shakespeare’s or Plato’s but in Boodle College’s hierarchy: I greeted each day with a grunt for the ache I hoped the rise of sun would bring: I thanked the gods for the gift of speech that let me bitch about cold soup and drafty rooms, for the intelligence and imagination that made me act out fine psychodramas on the logical-positivistic kick man is without soul.

But now —

“Joe,” my wife Nancy, reading over my shoulder, reminds me, “you said you’re no hero. Are you then a prophet?”

“Baby,” say I, shaking her off, “only the blackest of pots will ever liberate kettles.”

Where was I? Ah, yes, rousing *you* Sleeping Beauties of the world: awake. Don’t I see through your game, tragic Dedalus: *you* built that maze; and don’t tell me you don’t know where the way out is. I watched you find it, and I heard you holler:

“Minos, Minos — my god, come quick! A door’s open! I may come down with a chill!”

Now you say you are trapped. I say *No!* And even once more: change your life.

The world is still here. Till it disappears we live with that miracle, possibility. I’ve confessed I’m no hero: I’ve proved I’m hopelessly confused. But stories don’t end on such notes. I’m no Pollyanna, I can’t give out with three cheers for will and a voluntaristic end to dilemma. Why, I don’t even know to write a happy ending.

So I sing confusion, ending as I began, I — we, Joseph Gillis, Joey Galsky, confused, but not happy to be so. My life’s absurd, like yours, but still I say it: it’s not over. It’s not ended. Not done.

Look on me, you unmighty, and live a little.

MEXICAN HAYRIDE

BY WILLARD MARSH

NIGHT LAY over Lake Chapala with the permanence of settled ruins. There were no sounds to it, no future. Creased shadows in the hills denied the moon to certain tilted cornfields, bared others to the granite evening. It could have been the San Francisco headlands, and Warner waited for the fog's far harbingers: its first deep diaphones speaking profoundly from Point Bonita to Mile Rock to Lime Point to the great orange bridge itself, then all the littler heralds urging the alarm, hooting from shelf to ship to inlet to pier as startled gulls revolved above the rocking buoys . . . But the only tumult was the mush and oscillation of his own mortality, auricle to ventricle; the only gulls the buzzards in their sere roosts, who by day considered him and took the long view. Now the sky began widening with wind. A night bird entered, whistling up its dinner or its mate. Whistling in echo, but not expecting anything of it, Warner took the cobbled climb from shore.

Farmers and their families were dropping off the buses from outlying villages, setting up their sidewalk emporiums (no taxes, no overhead, out of the high-rent district). Avocados stacked in fives, unchanged since the Tarascan bazaars, a peso a pyramid; melons fresh from the vine, and scallions clotted with warm earth. The movie had already started, the late arrivees hurrying inside with their chairs. The programs were made up of newsreels, interspliced with a U.S. Western featuring stars long resident in Forest Lawn, but young and fearless here forever. There were occasional Spanish subtitles. Those who could read repeated them in unison for

those who couldn't. Now and then the cinema folk would do something immoral or incomprehensible or simply dull, and the Mexicans would whistle severely, the way one does at a bull ring when the matadors refuse to earn their handsome fees. It seemed to have little effect. Warner's countrymen would soon be gathering for canasta or charades, followed by loud, bad Bach and bad, flat highballs. It was Sunday. But then it's always Sunday in the American colony.

He cut up toward the Spring of Grace. Women were grouped around it balancing water jugs, their strong hips braced against the weight and seeming continuous with their lesser vessels. A pack train of firewood came jogging through the dusk. The burros passed him with forlorn, liquid eyes, like backslid deer in an evil incarnation. Across the street stood a Packard, six years older than it was when it arrived here, but still serviceable. Ask the lady who owns one. The lady was also six years older and could stand it less.

Her house was dark, her door agape, as always. Her dog leaped on Warner in the shadowed hallway, whining with delight and bumping its clumsy butt against him. Warner cuffed it on the snout, and assuming he was playing it fell into a fit of capering and barking.

"Now, Puppy duckles, quit that ruckus," a sugary voice from inside sang; then: "*Quiénnnn?*"

"Only us chickens," Warner called, coming up into the patio.

On the rope bed that doubled as a couch he made out the forms of Victory Richmond and Dionisio Gómez, bundled under a serape. They brought their hands out from beneath — Victory a little self-consciously as she sat forward to light the lamp.

"Well, Warner, I haven't seen you in a month of Sundays."

"How's ever little thang, Miss Victory? *Qué tal, hombre?*" He nodded to Dionisio.

"*Q'hubo*, Huarner?" Dionisio answered lazily.

"My, I didn't have the least idea it was so dark. I expect one's eyes get accustomed. We were just sitting here discussing a chair Dionisio's mending for me."

"He's quite a mender," Warner said, taking a cowhide chair opposite them. There was a silence. "Clever with his hands," he clarified.

"Yes, well, and then you know how these things go in Spanish." Victory fanned herself with a magazine. "The time it can consume."

"You mean it takes longer in Spanish? I always heard it was the other way around."

She managed to look maligned. "I don't believe I care for your insinuations, Warner."

"Was I insinuating again? God dammit, I'll never learn to speak directly."

"That's a very definite trait in your character, I've noticed. Suspicion."

He winked at her deliberately. She struggled to remain slurred Southern womanhood, then gave up, laughing.

"Contrary to what you're thinking, I don't spend *all* my time that way."

Quite an attractive lady, this Mrs. Richmond, Warner thought. Rather eerily so, because before too much longer she'd be half a century old. She had one of those lucky complexions that would last as long as she would, plus sensibly cut blond hair and a durable figure from which she wrung the liquor calories by fanatic afternoons of Ping-pong. But it was mostly love and laughter, equally unmotivated, that kept her supple.

"Care for a Pepsi, Warner?" When Victory was on the wagon, everyone was on the wagon.

"No, thanks." He was too lazy to get one from the icebox.

"There's a fresh lemonade if you'd prefer. The pitcher's over yonder."

"That's a thought. Got any rum to cut it with?"

"The maid hid it."

"Where?"

"How should I know?"

"I mean, got any ideas?"

She was only politely concerned. "No telling how her mind convives. Reckon you should try the well?"

"The well?" Warner hiked over to it, pulled the bucket up. A wicker jug of rum was nestled in it. A clear case of clairvoyance. It turned out that Victory would also have a little dash of rum, just a smidgen, in her lemonade. Dionisio had his straight.

Absently lowering half her glass, Victory said, "How's your play progressing, Warner?"

"I ought to finish up this scene I'm on next month."

"Isn't that just grand?"

Now it was his turn. "How's the sculpting coming?"

"Well, ordinarily wild horses couldn't drag me from it. But I've had to wear myself to the bone with *this* one," she jabbed an elbow in Dionisio's ribs, "getting him to comprehend the *simplest* work I want done. Honestly, if I waited for him to exercise the least scrap of initiative I'd be dead and buried. Warner, honey, would you float a teeny weeny bit of rum on top of this? It's awfully concentrated lemonade."

Bored by all the English, Dionisio picked up the guitar he'd sold Victory and was theoretically teaching her. He began singing in the pleasant near-falsetto that, in Mexico as well as Ireland, every male seemed born with.

*Arroz con leche/Me quiero casar
Con una muñeca/De este lugar. . . .*

The village waxed and waned with the lake, and in the dis-solutely handsome face of Dionisio Gómez you could read its present level. If it were higher, permitting fishing and swimming, there would be a flood of tourists with chairs requiring mending and occasions requiring streetsingers. The merchants would prosper, and Dionisio would be carpentering by day and working the fiestas by night, growing fat and dull and moral. His wife could buy material for twenty dresses if she liked, his children could have toys in abundance. And as for his mistress, she would be a *muñeca* of this locality (as he was singing), shy and unhandled, and speaking only when she was addressed, instead of this witless pampered whore (as he would put it) who spoke no sense continuously in a barbaric tongue, and from whom he was forced to accept money which, though he more than earned it, was a reflection on his integrity and could only be assuaged by quantities of her rum, which only made him sullen.

"*Qué te parece, hombre?*" Warner asked him. "Will the lake regain its height someday?"

"Why not?" Dionisio said irritably. "If this cuckolding drought

abates and there be rains. Provided that your countrymen devise no bigger bombs to change the weather."

"I'll write my senator," Warner told him.

He smiled sourly and shifted into a brisk canteen tune. He played as well as he ever would, since it was beneath a musician's dignity to practice once he got to be a *maestro*.

"O-lay!" Victory clapped her hands. "Isn't he just heavenly? It's that Spanish blood, it'll tell every time. If only he didn't incline to drink so heavily." She rumbled his hair reprovingly.

"What is this that she says now?" he asked Warner.

"That you are number one of the guitar."

He grunted. "Your brains come in bottles," he told her, and pointed at the rum jug. "Educate yourself!"

But she was busy studying the flat planes of his face. "If he isn't the *spit*-image of some old Toltec idol. I'm simply going to *have* to do a bust of him."

Warner helped himself to another few inches of rum. Dionisio was puzzling out the melody line of something, getting as far as the fifth bar when he'd bog down each time. Victory sighed.

"They're just like children, aren't they? Not a solitary grief in all creation. The church baptizes them and the church buries them, and in between it does their thinking." She grabbed Dionisio's hair and shook his head. "Don't you want to *make* something of yourself? Don't you want to go back to America with me and get on television?"

He ignored her.

"Just like talking to a stone wall. Look," she told him, "oo-sted," she jabbed him in the chest, "yo," she prodded her hospitable bosom, "el Estados Oo-nidos? Mucho dinero?"

"*Como quiera Diós*," he said dryly. As God wishes.

"There, you see?" Victory said in sad triumph. "I'd give anything if I could have their simple faith. Oh, well, I don't care to trouble myself about the hereafter." With the rum beginning to reach her, she turned moody. "I'm a fatalist. There's no way of changing what's to come. Let's live a while before we have to pay for it."

There was a clatter of feet in the hallway, and Cassius came running in. The dog sprang up, tackling him halfway, and after wres-

ting with it briefly he broke loose. Thwarted, it doubled back and leaped into Warner's chair. He smacked it heavily in the side and it fell down, wagging its tail and barking frenziedly.

"Now, Warner, don't encourage her," Victory said. "If she gets too excited she makes doo-doo on the mats. Well, young man, it's high time you were coming in for supper."

Cass came on up, panting. He greeted Warner as coolly as he dared with his ten years. Then he edged over to the table and glanced in Victory's glass casually.

"We were taking a little lemonade for refreshment," she said quickly. "There's more in the pitcher."

He picked up her glass and sniffed it.

She took it from him with a silvery laugh. "You don't want this, dear. I let Warner put a little rum on top to be sociable."

"Better lay off it," Cass said.

"Why, what on earth — I'm *ashamed* I heard you say that," Victory said. "Just what was the nature of that innuendo, pray?"

The boy turned away in defeat. "Listen, I got to have two pesos. I need a tablet for school."

"You do, do you?" she said. "Well, it may interest you to know I'm not putting out one red cent more for tablets. I'll give you the opportunity to speak straightforward. What happened to the one I gave you money for last week?"

Cass was trapped. "Chuey's goat ate it."

Victory laughed, the perspective restored once more between indulgent mother and transparent child.

"How can you keep ahead of them?" she told Warner. "All right, run ask Alberta where my purse is, and tell her to fix you and Warner a plate of whatever's in the oven."

Warner went through the motions of refusing his only meal since breakfast, but to no avail. Back from the kitchen, Cass shyly settled himself at the feet of Dionisio, whom he placed in a stabler category than his mother's other gentlemen callers.

"What must a man do, Dionisio, if insulted by a stronger man?"

"*Pos*, Cass, no man is as strong as the edge of a knife."

"Yes, but I am not yet a man."

"Someone gave you insult?"

"To me, no. To my mother."

"An insult of what nature?"

"That she was a woman of moral irresponsibility, liberal with her body."

"Who said this?"

"The nephew of Eliseo of the goats."

"The fat one with the cockeye?"

"No, the tall one of the measles scars."

"I will speak to Eliseo. There will be no more of this."

"Your word?"

"My word. . . ."

Self-consciously, Warner picked up one of Cass's comic books. Soon he was a gullible tourist in a realm where a mouse named El Ratón Miguelito was the owner of a foolish, talking dog, and a duck known as Pato Pascual went fox hunting. At the bottom of each page there would be inspirational slogans. *Save: you gain and Mexico progresses. Prefer the book that educates, not the alcohol that debases.*

Now Alberta brought their plates in, and Cass kept her running for fresh tortillas. They made pretty fair *tacos* when the canned pork and beans were rolled in them. They also had pork chops, a little burnt, but more free from trichinosis that way. Cass was talking and waving a taco, and it dribbled on him.

"Cassie, dear, I *wish* you could learn to cultivate a few graces at the table," Victory said. "You're getting to be as bad as the Mexicans."

He nodded absently, finished bolting his food and cut for the door.

"Cassius! You're not to leave the house this evening, you hear? You're keeping entirely too late hours, you need the sleep for school."

"I'll be right back," he called. "We got a calf cornered down at Lalo's barn and I have to fight it." And he was gone.

Victory sighed, reaching for the rum. "Sometimes I just can't fathom that child's attitude. Be a lamb, Warner, and fetch the lemonade?"

By the time he got back out on the street, Jesús Ochoa was getting ready to crank down the Virgin-blue riot door of his grocery shop named The Eternal Struggle. A short fat man of military lean-

ings, armed with a mustache like Zapata's, he was scowling hideously at the prosperity of his adjacent competitor, The Sun Shines For All. His vegetables were deployed in tidy ranks, like the bric-à-brac retired colonels use to reconstruct old battles.

"Yes, sir," Warner said. "Another day, another dollar."

Jesús smiled blankly. "*Mande?*"

"No importance. How is the señora?"

"Well, thanks."

"And the children?"

"Also. Without novelty. And yourself?"

"Equally. And the crops?"

Jesús shrugged. "Average, no more."

"And the midnight crop?" Warner asked delicately.

Jesús assumed a guarded expression. Cautiously, he removed a packet from a locked drawer. Fifty grams' worth. They settled on a price of two pesos, which was put on Warner's tab, along with half a liter of cane alcohol. Partway back to Doña Felipa's, the lights went out all over town. Lightning in the mountains, maybe, or just some truck colliding with a pole. Warner eased his way through the extinguished streets, beneath a wind-driven moon, to the *posada* door; felt out the bell rope and leaned on it. After a while the old girl slapped on down to let him in, her lantern shedding a waxen path back to the patio.

From its trellis the *teléfono* vine, the width of Warner's finger, sprawled like a stunned snake, its dark green leaves glistening richly as a pelt. Growing from a deceptively small pot, like a cobra from a basket, it lay in a digestive stupor. Almost half as old as himself, it was, like himself, a carnivore. Doña Felipa treated it regularly to saucers of blood, on which it thrived and fattened and waited through the hungry evenings, its thousand pointed leaves thrust out like tongues.

The doña raised her lantern. "Shall I make a little omelet for you, Señor Huarner?" she asked hopefully.

"Thanks, no. I have already eaten."

She left him to the shadows, pleased at having just the one meal on his day's bill. Miz Richmond's imported pork-and-beans were still a gluey filler in his stomach, and he wondered if the *teléfono* vine had done as well. They considered one another in the rustling night. What was it that cannibals called fillet of human? Long pig.

Care for a spot of Dr. Livingston's Long Pork and Beans, you bastard? Next time I cut myself shaving I'll give you a break.

Then, dialing the combination lock, Warner let himself into the door of his home and castle.

It was composed of one large room, with adobe walls unadorned except by whitewash. There were no pinups, pots of sweet peas, conversation pieces. Instead, he had four blank screens for the projection of whatever whimsies or horrors he was given by euphoria, either self-induced or chemically assisted. There was a table with a typewriter, a shelf of books, a chair, ash trays, et cetera, and upstage left a bed, for the development of the Freudian underlife.

Now he took his half quart of pure cane alcohol, one hundred ninety proof, and mixed it with half a quart of reasonably pure water. This gave him one full quart of ninety-five-proof white rum, otherwise known as Old Doc Warner's Sunday Punch. Next, he carefully shook out the packet Jesús had given him. The stuff was unworked, just as it came stripped from the plant. There were seeds with it, about the size of barley, and pieces of stem; but it was mostly dried and crumbled leaves, olive drab, somewhat resembling *orégano*. A little more piquant, however. By a process of tilting and scraping it the heavier impurities were separated, and he ended up with a tiny mound of powder known to all good Fagins variously as tea, jive, pot, hay, hemp, Maryjane.

Rolling himself a stick of it, Warner lit up and drew a lungful, along with some air for carburetion. He held it as long as he could, gradually exhaled, seeing his streaked breath in the candlelight; got that metallic aftertaste, shuddered, coughed and lit a natural cigarette. Three drags later and the chore was done, the psyche cast adrift. For the next odd ninety minutes he would be someone else's creature.

He wound the clock, reality's compass, and arbitrarily set it for midnight. He would be free at one-thirty. But if the clock stopped, he was done for; there'd be no way of ever getting back.

The lights came back on, the sudden glare jarring him. He snapped them off, poured a shot of alcohol to set the marijuana, and with the smell of burnt weeds in the air he settled back to wait for news from Shangri-la.

It wasn't long in coming. First, from far away, there was the

sound of the sea in his ears, the way you'd hear it through a faulty sea shell. Then this sea gently tugged at his extremities, cooling them and causing them to tingle. The tide rose, gathering and carrying him, and he was lifted from his chair to stand enormous in its seething center, clearheaded, bared and buoyant.

Then in that ever new and startling way, the shift set in. Perspective warped, so imperceptibly that it could only be detected sideways. Contours were softened, but in no way blurred. And now a great inner organ of perception opened, like the engaging of an unused brain lobe. Through it, Warner became minutely aware of himself, the branching of the capillary system, the breathing of the pores, the hustling ganglia and the old persistent heart, revving like a stone engine. He monitored these activities for quite some time (directing them, in fact) in awe and wonder. He expanded with self-appreciation. God *damn*, he thought, this is *some* hay.

Suddenly everything was funny. The way the chair set at such a ludicrous angle to the floor, the silly-assed candle consuming itself, and his drunken, grotesque self. His stomach worked in convulsive spasms of laughter. Then quite abruptly, he was sober.

Warner picked up the clock. It was five past midnight.

He sat down, emptied of any emotion whatsoever, waiting for something he couldn't quite remember — and then it started up again, beginning to lift him on a new and higher wave. He hurried to the typewriter, wanting to be ready when it broke. It took the damndest time to get a sheet of paper in the machine. His hands were uncoordinated, like a spastic's; he was way ahead of his body.

Finally Warner groped open his play folder, with its scribbled notes on characters, the half-assembled scenes, the clever exits and the midnight flashes. Ignoring all external trivia, such as the interpenetration of his fingers with the space bar, he began to put it all down. There were no doubts now, no reservations. He saw his entire play, from the opening curtain to the last slow close, the action vivid and convincing, the people bursting with life. But the mechanics of translating it to paper kept getting in the way. Each word that leaped to print swarmed with rich new vistas of association, and the exploration of them was compulsive. Simultaneously, there was a canny campaign taking place to resist this compulsion, to smuggle out the message.

Come on, fool, say it. It's never been so comprehensible. Indispensable. Consequenceable, evidenceable, uncondensable — uncondensable? Now, really, Warner, what kind of woolly terminology is this? Why, it's beautiful terminology, so I guess you can go poop, Warner. Poop, is it? Just for that I guess you can have a knee in the brisket.

Gradually, a mellow lassitude invaded him, pinning his arms to the table. He'd make it yet, if not tonight some other night. He couldn't miss . . .

He came back to himself with the feel of boulders being rolled from his chest. His heart was jumping like a rabbit in a sack. He could move again. We've been away for quite a while, haven't we? Next time leave a forwarding address.

The clock read 12:22.

He picked it up in a panic of disbelief, shook it. He'd been completely loaded, *stoned*, for at least one full hour. He *knew* it had been at least an hour. That meant he couldn't trust himself, because he was only twenty-two minutes along, with the peak yet to come. At that rate it might be hours — days even, before he got in phase with time again. *Maybe never*, a voice chuckled in his skull. After all, it's called loco weed, isn't it? You poor son of a bitch, you've skewed yourself into insanity and you'll never make it back.

Warner sat in quiet terror, up to the forehead, those delicate prefrontal lobes with their fused synapses, in a pool of ice water. Nothing significant in itself had changed. He was aware of shapes and objects, but there was just a terribly thin screen between them and himself.

Then, while he waited in the void, he realized that it was 12:23.

All the filaments of his body brimmed with relief as he watched the clock hand moving, the slow wheel ferrying him home. Only an hour more to go. He'd make it, no matter how long it took. Pushing aside the folder entitled *Six Authors In Search of a Character*, he decided this wasn't his night. Instead, he began another letter to the girl he used to introduce to people as his first wife.

Dear Gerry:

I made a little poem for you, a nonheroic couplet.

G
Me

No period, because it never stops.

Remember Russian Hill in San Francisco, in the rain, the bay full of foghorns and the air with bells? And you, adrift on the up-anchored night beside me, while the lispng rain communicated with the roofs. From the window I could see two muffled stars, enough to steer by. Fresh from the fevered country of your hair, I'd watch your body curving to the mattress's polarity. You slept, the rain's casual syllables went past; while I, child of short memory in the banished wood, would search your pollen-heavy lids and that herbed mouth loose from love's small language, for the warm way back. And now my love the angel bitch, my first and last wife Oh she sleeps in other climates now oh now is the time for all good alienists to come to the aid of a wandering client who can't lie still for long enough to get a Jungling, Ranking, Reiking, and most especially a thorough Berglerizing and be robbed of all necessity to be himself . . .

He craddled his head on the typewriter. It made a Gerry-cold lap for him, and he must have slept a little. Eventually it was 1:30, as it had to be, and he was out of it.

He reached for the lights, but they were off again. As his hand paused above the dwindling candle Warner could see his wrist vein throbbing, and for the first time in his life he understood that some day, between two pulses, it could stop. And now he knew that Victory Richmond understood all this, and more. For once she was dead, she'd have to go to hell.

His pulse picked up its canter, merged with the rhythm of the nightly herd of wild burros as they came galloping down the cobbles, their breaths whuffing in the stone-rung evening. The candle bluttered.

I wish I could tell Victory it's not so bad in hell, he thought. At times it's really not so bad at all.

FIRST MARRIAGE

BY ST. CLAIR McKELWAY

WHENEVER I start writing seriously about myself (he said) a small ground force composed of the kind of men who fought at Thermopylae makes an effort to surround and contain me. These men are not equipped with the weapons I carry. I am facing them alone, but I have, so to speak, a shoulder holster in which is lodged a .45. In the pockets of my jacket are two grenades. And in my briefcase is an automatic rifle that can be assembled and put to use as easily as a fishing rod. There are no shells in the .45 or in the automatic rifle, and the grenades do not have any high explosive in them. Mine are empty weapons, but my antagonists don't know this. Not looking at them—but aware that they are looking at me—I put on a silent demonstration. I set up the automatic rifle, I take the .45 and twirl it once or twice, I juggle the grenades from hand to hand. And soon I am left alone. Then I cease to be a prestidigitator and go on writing about myself. There is no further interference. I usually write in the study of my home, in North Stamford. I mean to say that on the extremely rare occasions when I write about myself I usually do it there. My monthly reports as chief trust officer of the bank, my annual reports to the board of directors, my public speeches, my business correspondence—and even most of my personal correspondence—are written or dictated at the main office downtown, of course. What I'm talking about are these things I sometimes write in my study at home. When I finish them, I read them once, tear them up, and burn them in the fireplace. We've got this

long trip to Chicago ahead of us, and you're my second-in-command, my first assistant at the bank, so I'm your superior, so to speak. After a while, you'll go to your roomette and go to sleep and I'll stay in this drawing room and go to sleep, but right now I want to tell you about what I wrote the other evening in my study on the general subject of my first marriage. Some of what I've already told you is exactly the way I wrote it down. But mostly I'll be telling you *about* what I wrote that evening, not *what* I wrote. In any case, I have the floor, as you might say, and we don't need to talk any more about how to handle the deal tomorrow. We can't fail if we play it safe, and that's what we're going to do. We've been over the whole thing. The hell with it until tomorrow.

I was twenty and she was twenty. We were precocious, and we thought we were experienced. I had gone to work for the bank and she had been to Goucher, but hadn't graduated, and had come to New York to start learning how to be a fashion designer. She was determined to be a fashion designer. I didn't know why then and I still don't know why. The other evening, I wrote down a great deal about her mother and father and sisters and the one brother, and I wrote a lot about my family, but none of it seems pertinent now. Suffice it to say that we both came from what used to be called the genteel poor. That meant our fathers made around five thousand a year and were thinking about getting a motorcar when we were in the Boy Scouts or the Camp Fire Girls, before this country got into the First World War. Anyway, I didn't turn out as I then thought I would turn out, and she didn't go on with the plans she had when I first met her. I run into her once in a great while these days, at some big party or in some restaurant — once in two or three years, maybe. We never really quarreled, you see.

Needless to say, we have both changed a lot. We've changed almost as much as the building in which we had our first apartment. It was on Sheridan Square, down in Greenwich Village. It was a four-story brick building, an old private residence, wide enough to have three windows across the front on the upper floors. On the ground floor was a cafeteria. Our newest branch office opened there a few weeks ago, as you know — or at least you know we opened the new branch on Sheridan Square a few weeks ago. The branch bank is on the ground floor now, and the trust department of that branch is on the second floor. The bookkeeping

department is on the third floor. I don't know what's on the top floor.

The building wasn't torn down when the bank decided to take it over. It was remodeled. The shell or skeleton or whatever you call it is the same as it always was. As you know, I haven't visited every single one of our branch offices in Manhattan. I haven't had time to, and there was no need for it. I didn't even know this new branch was in that building until I saw it out of a taxicab window the other day — last Tuesday — when I was riding down Seventh Avenue after the convention lunch at the Astor. But I recognized it. A couple of blocks after I'd recognized it, I told the cabdriver to pull over to the curb. I paid him off and walked back and went up in an automatic elevator to the second floor. There wasn't any elevator in the place when we lived there, of course. Some young fellow I've met at annual meetings spoke to me when I got out at the second floor, and I told him I'd just happened to be passing by and thought I'd drop in and see the new branch's trust department. He was very pleased, and showed me around, talking a blue streak all the time. I have no idea what he said.

The building wasn't very deep from front to back, and it isn't any deeper now. Where the trust department is — that was where our first apartment was. On the second floor. The woodwork is all gone, and the marble fireplace is gone. The fireplace was in the living room. In addition to the living room, there was a kind of alcove, where our bed was — a studio couch, double-size — and there was a bathroom and a kitchen, both very small. When we moved in, the woodwork had at some time in the past been painted white and it needed repainting. We painted it ourselves — the heavy doors, the wide window frames and window seats, the built-in bookcases on either side of the fireplace, the arch between the living room and the alcove. And the floors, of course. We painted the floors black and the heavy old doors black, and we painted all the rest of the woodwork orange. The walls were in good enough shape and didn't need to be painted. They were covered with stuff of a grayish, brownish shade known in those days as oatmeal wallpaper. It had a rough texture and was very durable. The walls didn't seem very important anyway. The woodwork was what was important, and the way we painted it I suppose

I'd think it was fantastic now, but it looked fine then. It was very satisfactory. She thought the whole place looked beautiful. I didn't use that word much. I often told her she was beautiful, and she was, but otherwise I didn't use that word much. All this, you understand, was quite some years ago. To be exact, it was in 1925.

One reason we didn't think it necessary to paint the walls was that the bookcases covered one main wall of the living room and on the other main wall, opposite the fireplace and the bookcases, we tacked up a large piece of batik. B-a-t-i-k, but pronounced as if it were spelled b-a-t-e-e-k. That was a kind of cloth material. It was supposed to come from India or Ceylon or the Dutch East Indies or somewhere out there. This material was woven in its natural color, of course — cream-colored, I guess. Then the natives out there would dye it. The way they did that, they would brush wax over the part or parts of the material they didn't want to be colored by the dye in the first tub of dye, and then they would dip the whole piece in. Then, after it had dried out, they would get the wax off the undyed parts with boiling water, and then they'd put some wax on the parts that had been dyed in the first tub of dye and dip the whole thing in the second tub of dye — except that, before doing that, they'd have put wax on some of the undyed parts as well as the parts already dyed. Then, in the same way, they'd use a third and maybe a fourth tub of dye. This process gave batik an interesting design when they were all through dyeing it. She told me all about how it was done. Our batik that we tacked on the wall opposite the fireplace and the bookcases was mostly a terra-cotta shade of red, with some yellow and some dark brown or black here and there. She thought it was beautiful and I liked it, too. In fact, I was extremely fond of it. The orange and black woodwork made the room gay, and the batik made it warm and soft. It was a very popular material. Everybody we knew in the Village had a piece of it on at least one wall of their living room. Then, as now, of course, a great many people who were neither artists nor writers lived down there. We knew two or three people who said they were artists and one chap who said he was a writer and another who said he was a poet, and we knew several newspaper reporters, both male and female, but most of our friends were young men who worked in Wall Street or in advertising agencies — or in the bank, of course — and young girls who worked in

Wanamaker's or somewhere like that, or were still studying at Columbia, or ran little shops or something. We hadn't known anybody in New York very long at the time of our marriage, because she was brought up in Rochester and my family came from around Trenton, and I'd been brought up there, of course. As a matter of fact, most of the people we knew were people we'd met in speak-easies — except for a couple of chaps I'd become friends with at the bank. From any number of different aspects, it must have been an entirely different sort of thing, being in the Village in 1925, than what it must be like now. But, on the other hand, I don't really know anything about what it's like now. To be twenty, I mean — down there or anywhere else. My oldest daughter's only seventeen, and besides, she and the two boys live in North Stamford, naturally. You've met my present wife, of course.

In the Village in those days, as I say, we met most of the people we knew in speak-easies, but we weren't particularly interested in knowing other people, no matter where we met them. We were always talking to each other about ourselves, about our thoughts and ambitions, about our dreams. Or so I wrote the other night. We talked a lot to each other about our pasts — all sorts of details, the smallest details, things that had happened to us before we met. We didn't exactly talk like married people. We talked like very young people, and yet we were married. Her face was young and bright and I guess mine was, too, and we were always laughing or looking very solemn. We would laugh, for example, at things in a book called *Crome Yellow*, by Aldous Huxley, or at something H. L. Mencken had written in the *American Mercury*. And we would look solemn when she read aloud to me, or I read aloud to her, the poems of Rupert Brooke or Edna St. Vincent Millay. I hadn't thought of those names for years, and I would have sworn I didn't remember them, but the other night when I was writing in my study they came to my mind as easily as the hours of departure of express trains to Stamford from Grand Central. We laughed and looked solemn at all the wonderful things we discovered together, and we never thought of ever being old or of ever being dead. There were just the two of us in all the world, and we were neither for it nor against it, we were just going through it together. We talked as I imagine a couple of very serene philosophers might talk to each other when they sit together on a terrace overlooking

a mountain valley. We never argued. We discussed. And neither of us tried to come out ahead, neither of us tried to win, because our hearts were full of truth, and the truth in our hearts was the same truth.

This writing seriously about myself is a very peculiar thing, and that's the reason why I always tear up what I've written and burn it, after I've read it through once. But some of it stays in my mind. When I am writing in this fashion, I put things down I don't know the meaning of, don't even pretend to know the meaning of. Walking around that second floor of the branch bank on Sheridan Square last Tuesday, looking for something that had moved away, I knew I'd be writing that evening in my study about this first marriage. What I told you about the men at Thermopylae is exactly what I wrote when I first sat down to write that evening, and that's an example of what I mean when I say these things I write on these rare occasions are peculiar, very strange.

Something just comes out, like the Thermopylae men and all that stuff. I don't know anything about who fought at Thermopylae, whether they were Spartans or Athenians or what, but it popped out of my ball-point pen, and so did a lot of other things I don't know the meaning of. And a lot of these things I can't remember again now, and I suppose I will never be able to remember them again. I felt solemn when I was writing that evening, but not what I'd call sad. I felt something like the way we used to feel when we looked solemn because of things we'd seen or done together. I haven't told you a fraction even of what I remember now of what I wrote then, and what I wrote then was only a fraction of everything that happened, but it's getting late, and I guess we'd better have one for the road and call it a night. One for the road. One for the railroad, the New York Central Railroad.

Of course, I set down a good many pages concerning the end of our marriage and why we thought we'd better get the divorce, and I remember all that now, but when you come right down to it none of it makes any real sense. There wasn't anything embarrassingly personal about it or anything like that, but it just seems to have no significance, whereas some of the other things I put down and have forgotten and even some of the things I remember now and have told you about seem to mean something. Of course, almost

everybody we knew in those days got a divorce, sooner or later, one way or another, and I wouldn't be surprised if most of those divorces were as foolish, really, as ours was. It was the fashion in those days, and I guess it's gotten to be something more than a fashion in these days. Or maybe conditions are improving in that direction now. I don't know. Our marriage lasted not quite three years, and we didn't have any children, although she had some later on and so did I.

I used to tell her there was nobody like her in the whole wide world, and she used to tell me the same thing, and, you know, I think in a way we were both right? At that time, in that place, there were just the two of us. And each of us was unique as far as the other was concerned. For a long time, there was nobody else in my life and there was nobody else in her life. When other people got into my life later on, it wasn't the life I had then that they were getting into. That life had moved on. When it was there, on Sheridan Square, nobody else could possibly have gotten into it. I think it was the same with her. We danced on rooftops. All over New York, and even at the Bossert, on Brooklyn Heights, there were bands on the tops of hotels, playing music for us to dance to. And we were married. Although, as I said, I wrote all the facts down along with everything else the other evening, I don't know what happened to that marriage. She used to quote a poem by a Frenchman, and one line of it was "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" She used to say the beautiful thing about that line was that the poet wasn't saying the snows of yesteryear had melted or disappeared, he was saying that the snows of yesteryear are still somewhere — unchanged, just as they were — and he's asking only to be told where they can be found. That was the first thing I remembered when I stepped off the elevator on the second floor of that building on Sheridan Square last Tuesday. She had bobbed hair and bangs that curled over her forehead and she had a mischievous smile along with her other smiles. Mildred Hastings. Milly.

SOCIETY

BY JEANNIE OLIVE

THE WEATHER got all mixed up that year. Indian summer idled so long on the slopes of the Blue Ridge that some of the birds never even flew south at all. Elfie and I walked to the settlement school without coats until the end of February, and the big boys of the upper grades spent their energy on the basketball court instead of having to chop wood to keep the school-house warm. The rest of us, from the primer grade on up, took our lunch boxes outside at noontime and sat around the court watching practice while we ate our ham and biscuits.

"We got the best basketball team in Cherokee County," I boasted later at home. "We got Glen and Troy Grimshaw, both on the first team."

"Humph," Grandpa grunted. "So them overgrown greazers are still hanging around the school. I thought Pope expelled them for keeps last year. I warned him."

"Mr. Pope took them back on a Bible promise to behave themselves," I said. "They're the best players in school."

"I know about their Bible promises," Grandpa said. "They'll last just about as long as the basketball."

"Wilda, I want you to promise to have nothing to do with those big old rough boys," Ma said. "Don't you even speak to them."

"Now, Bird," Grandpa said to her, "seeing you're natured to worry about something, for God's sake worry about whether that donkey man's putting any learning in their heads. Looks to me like all the scholars' heads have turned to basketball."

The schoolmaster rode a donkey to school, and whenever Grandpa wanted to make light of him he always brought that donkey into it.

"Rufe Clemson Pope is a fine teacher," I said. "We learn a God's plenty."

"Aah," Grandpa said. "Tell me one thing you learned today. I want to know how my taxes are spent."

He pushed his chair back from the table. I was always the one through supper first, but that did me no good. I wasn't allowed to leave until excused. Ma finished second, and then we just had to sit there and wait until Grandpa finished and finally wiped the buttermilk from his whiskers and pushed his chair back.

I pretended he wasn't there and turned to Ma. "They's this new girl at school, name of Eula Bay Stiles. She wears a red hat and speaks proper. Elfie hates her."

"Eula Bay Stiles?" Ma repeated. "Any a-kin to the Stileses on Slow Creek? Down by the L and N track?"

"I don't know. Elfie said that was the ugliest hat ever she seen. She said if that hat was hern, she'd do her business in it and throw it away."

"Wilda!"

Grandpa brought his fist down on the table. "Jesus Christ, so that's how my taxes are spent! Now I asked you a simple question. You sit up straight and tell me one thing you learned today."

His whiskery face leaned over me, and I felt the smile dry on my mouth, the chair rungs dig my shoulders. I searched my head for a thing to tell and said finally, "A noun word is the name of a person, place, or thing."

"Well, then, that's better," Grandpa grudging. "Learn a little something every day. Drop by drop fills the cup."

From that time on he had a new habit. "What did you learn in school today?" It was the same old question every single night of the year. I soon figured out that if I hadn't learned anything, I'd better make up something on the way home.

Grandpa's sudden and powerful interest in the settlement school began when he was put on the school board, a mistake if ever there was one. He was enough things already. Besides Ma and me, he had all the farm hands and tenants to boss. Anybody would have thought he owned these people outright, especially the Bowlands,

who lived down in the laurel slick. Tam and Minnie agreed with everything he said, though Elfie went her own way.

For another thing, Grandpa was justice of the peace. That brought him even more folks to boss. He settled all manner of local disputes before they ever got to the Greenville court. He'd never tolerated any spying on a trial, but from what little I gleaned, I vowed if I ever got in trouble I'd take it straight to the Greenville court.

Sometimes he would allow Ma and me to watch a wedding. Ma always wept, thinking, I suppose, of being a widow woman and lonesome.

"Which one of them Grimshaws do you think is the prettiest?" Elfie asked me. We had finished lunch and sat under the honey locust tree near the basketball court. Elfie was squeezing the long half-dried pods of the locust and licking out the honey wax. She had a sweet tooth that was never satisfied.

I thought of the basketball players. Troy and Glen Grimshaw pranced about the court like stallions, their shiny black heads a double span taller than the other players. They dodged, jumped, snatched the ball away, and made a ringer every time. I had to admit myself they didn't look bad.

"I mean if you was to have to choose one, which would you claim?"

"Nary one," I said. "They're both mean as stripid snakes."

"Troy's not so mean," she said, blushing.

We heard a laugh from behind the tree, and Eula Bay Stiles hopped out before us. "They, Lordee!" she said. "I just heard me a real secret."

Elfie eyed her coldly and went on twisting the locust pod.

"Elfie and Troy went for a ride, Troy fell out and Elfie cried — Lordee!"

She laughed fit to kill. I thought it was funny too, but Elfie's green eyes narrowed.

"You shet your mouth," she said, "or I'll shet it for you."

"Well for goodness," Eula Bay said in her put-on voice. "Can't you mountain children take a joke?" She turned her back on us and walked away.

That afternoon Mr. Pope got up in Society and said he'd heard

some of the little girls weren't treating the new girl nice. "That's what we've got this Society for," he told us, "to learn to keep a civil tongue. We can debate our differences polite and proper instead of with fists and threats."

"*Society?* What in hell blazes is *Society?*" Grandpa blared out that night. Elfie was having supper with me. She was still feeling low and didn't raise her head.

"It's debating," I said, "and reciting poems and things. Mr. Pope makes us memorize a poem a week. He says in case we might go blind someday and not be able to read."

Grandpa wiped his whiskers. "Well, can you beat that? Did you hear that, Bird?"

Ma leaned forward with a new worry on her face. "Blind?" she repeated softly. "Go blind?"

"Why don't that jackass rider teach subjects?" Grandpa stormed. "Stick to what's in the books."

"Poems are in books," Elfie said, brightening up to join the fray.

"Aaah, all right. Recite the poem."

I shut my eyes.

"The woman was old and ragged
and gray
And bent with the chill of the
winter's day . . ."

"Cripes!" Grandpa shouted. "That's enough of that." He turned to Elfie, who had begun to laugh. "All right, Miss Towhead, what did you learn?"

"Well, they was this old queen across the waters," she answered boldly, peering sideways at Grandpa, "and she beat up the Spanish navy and dyed her teeth blue and was a virgin."

I heard Ma suck in her breath. Grandpa said, "You're excused now." I always marveled at Elfie's nerve.

March came, and the weather man tricked us again. It changed overnight from the best to the worst. We woke up in the dark freezing cold, and Ma had to rummage around getting out more

quilts fast. We ate breakfast huddled around the kitchen stove, while Grandpa raved and ranted about his sorry hired hands, who'd never finished getting in our wood supply.

Elfie and I walked to school bundled like Eskimos. The ridge path crackled under our feet, and the ruts in the Turtlepond Road were filled with spears of mush ice, like icicles turned upside down. Elfie broke off one and tasted it. "Bet we could pour sugar on the road of a cold night and make popsicles," she said.

Mr. Pope worked at the stove in the corner of the schoolroom, and the big rough boys were carrying in wood. They had sullen looks on their faces and threw their armloads of logs down so hard the windows rattled.

"Come boys, take it like sports," Mr. Pope said. "Basketball season is over, and no need to be bad-tempered about it. I've told you many a time, the only reason we have basketball in the first place is to learn to be good sports."

I saw Troy Grimshaw look at Glen and make a face. He flipped his eyelids back under the sockets and drew his mouth down like a scarecrow.

"What if Troy's face was to freeze like that?" I whispered to Elfie. "Would you say he was so pretty then?"

The primer children's benches were moved closer to the stove, and the rest of us grumbled through chattering teeth, taking turns to go up and thaw our hands. When the schoolhouse finally did get warmed up, Eula Bay Stiles complained it smelled stuffy and wanted to open a window. Mr. Pope sent her out to get a drink of water instead, but the dipper was frozen solid in the bucket and had to be brought inside.

"Now children, we're going to buckle down to work."

"*Now children,*" one of the big boys mocked from the back.

Mr. Pope turned to see who it was, and behind his back a spitball hit the blackboard. At lunch he found a dead mouse in his dinner pail. Things went from bad to worse, and the worst thing happened when we were dismissed early and Mr. Pope went around back to fetch his donkey. Somebody had clipped all the hair off its tail.

That riled the teacher more than all the other things together. He called everyone back but the primer children and kept us late.

"I aim to find out who did it," he warned. "Now I can put up with mischief of a sort. Pranks are pranks and boys will be boys. But one thing's sure, I'll not tolerate any molesting of my beast."

He threatened and questioned and scolded. "If any of you know who did this black deed and fail to tell, then I hold that person equally guilty and I'll mete out equal punishment."

It was almost dark when we got home. Elfie and I hurried along as fast as we could to keep warm. The hemlocks on the ridge path rose like giant ghosts in the frozen fog.

"They look like haints," Elfie said. "You ever seed a ghost-booger?"

"Reckon who done that thing at school?" I said. "Bet it was one of the Grimshaws, sure as shootin'."

"One think sure, old R. C. Pope will never know," she said. "Nobody's fool enough to tattle on a Grimshaw."

Just thinking about it, Elfie laughed the rest of the way home. "Never hoped to see me such a sight as that beast's tail," she said. "Lordee — looked like a rat's tail hung on a donkey!"

The next morning we learned that Glen Grimshaw was expelled. Mr. Pope had word of his guilt from an eyewitness. The children stared at each other's faces in wonderment. Telling was a thing rarely done at the settlement school.

"I'm satisfied it's that Eula Bay Stiles," Elfie told me. "There's your tattletail. There's the one with the slippy tongue."

"Troy don't seem to think so," I said. "I saw him talking to her before books were took up — joking and a-joshing like he was sweet on her."

"Troy's not that much of a loony," Elfie said, her face closed and brooding. "All I know is, I'd not like to be in *somebody's* shoes."

It was plain that most of the others agreed with Elfie. Anybody would have thought Eula Bay had nits in her head, the way she was shunned. Nobody would talk to her. At noon she was eating her lunch with the primer children. Only Troy Grimshaw stood by her, catching her glance whenever he could and doing his funny eyeball trick to make her laugh. It looked like Eula Bay had Troy lined up on her side, all right, and of course Mr. Pope. He bragged on her all day and allowed before all he'd never had a brighter pupil to teach. Elfie sat off in a corner, looking sick enough to die.

That afternoon in Society we had a debate. It was resolved that

book sense was more useful than horse sense. Society was funny that way. All manner of things were argued, both serious and foolish. Eula Bay took the affirmative and Troy Grimshaw the negative. About four-thirty Mr. Pope sent the little fellows home, primed up the stove and let them talk on. Finally he got up and said it was over and Eula Bay won.

"You won fair and square," Troy said to her, as we gathered books and coats, "yet I'm not convinced you're right. They's knowledge stored up in folks' heads around here that's never been wrote down in books."

"Superstitions," Eula Bay said. "You all probably still believe in ghosts around here."

"Now, I'd not go so far as to say that," Troy said. "Useful things I mean, things the Cherokees knowed and passed on to the settlers. Some of it would come in mighty handy, if you was of a mind to learn."

"What, for instance?"

He picked up her books and they started for the door. Some of us followed, curious, trying to think what could be on Troy's mind.

"Why, listening with your tongue. Bet you never knowed you could learn to hear things with your tongue."

Eula Bay laughed. "Go on now. I'm not that dumb."

"Here you walk along that old L and N railroad track all the way from Slow Creek every day, and and you never knowed you could listen for the train with your tongue?"

"You're crazy," she said. But she was interested, too. Anybody could tell that. When Troy started along the Slow Creek path with her, still carrying her books, she didn't object. She just kept smiling at him, never taking her eyes from his face.

"I swear to God on a stack of Bibles," Troy said. "You can ask anybody around here. These chaps all know." A few of us had been idling along behind them, burning with curiosity yet pretending not to listen. They turned around suddenly, facing us.

"Ask ary one of these chaps if you can't hear a train a-coming by touching your tongue to the railroad track."

"I got to be getting home," Abe Andrews said. "It's getting nigh on to dark."

"Me, too," another said, turning back. "See you'uns all in the mornin'."

"Ma will have a dying fit if I'm late again today," I said. "Come on, Elfie."

Elfie didn't budge.

"Ask this little girl here," Troy said, "if you don't believe me. Ask her. She's got horse sense."

Eula Bay looked Elfie up and down. "I wouldn't take anybody's word," she said. "If I wanted to know, I'd see for myself."

"Now you're talking horse sense," Troy said. "We'll all go down with you to prove it." He grabbed Eula Bay's arm and they were off down the Slow Creek trail, half running.

We stood there a moment, deciding. Elfie's face looked pinched in the dusky dark. The cold wind roared through the cove like a tunnel, flapping our coats, curling down our coat collars. My feet were beginning to feel tingly numb.

"I got to go home," I said, shivering. "Grandpa will be fit to be tied."

"Come on," Elfie said. She tugged my arm. "It won't take long. We're late anyhow. Ten minutes more won't make a speck of difference."

She began to run after them. I followed, and a few others followed me, though by the time we reached the train crossing it was too dark to see who was there and who was not. Two shadowy forms were bending down to the tracks. And then I heard Eula Bay scream.

After that all bedlam broke loose. The children were running in every direction, shouting for help, for a light, calling Mr. Pope's name. "Get some warm water," I heard somebody say. "Her tongue done stuck to the track!" All the time there was Eula Bay's ringing scream, a sound coming from deep in the throat, vibrating along the steel rail. I stood frozen in horror, numb not only in my feet but all the way up my spine.

"Just a little at a time, Eula Bay. Don't jerk." It was Mr. Pope's voice. "Pull easy. Now, try again." His flashlight pinpointed Eula Bay lying beside the track. I didn't want to look, yet was too numb to move my eyes away.

"A little more water, boys. Don't panic now, Eula Bay. Try again now."

Suddenly her head jerked upward and her body rolled over in

anguish. The screams stopped but she was moaning and twisting, with her hand over her mouth. Mr. Pope picked her up quickly and wrapped her in the donkey's blanket. Then he got up bareback and held Eula Bay in front of him.

"Doc Cain first. He'll get her to the Greenville Clinic," I heard him say. And then he added, "There'll be no school tomorrow, children. Pass the word around. Instead, some of us will be making a visit to the justice of the peace. This here's a criminal act, not a schoolboy's prank."

A girl standing beside me began to sob. Mr. Pope started off toward the road, but before that he turned the beam of his flashlight slowly around us, making a complete circle.

I didn't know whether the light caught my face or not. I only know that I began to run, and someone sobbing came after me. We sped across the frozen stubble, stumbling, falling, and then were up again and running down the Turtlepond Road faster than the wind which roared at our back. It was only when I stopped on the ridge path, a pain stabbing at my side, that I realized the sobbing girl behind me was Elfie.

We leaned against a ghosty hemlock, holding tight to each other but finding no comfort.

"Never thought I'd turn out a criminal," Elfie choked. "Might as well die now as spend the rest of my life in a jailhouse."

"You couldn't know what Troy was up to," I said. "We couldn't read his mind."

"I knowed he was seeking to get even," she said, "but I never knowed he was that mean. Half the skin on her tongue . . ."

"He didn't even know she was the one that told," I interrupted quickly. I didn't want to think about Eula Bay's tongue.

"Yes, he did," Elfie confessed. "He did — he did. Happens I'm in a position to know . . ." She began sobbing again, and I understood what she meant.

"Troy was a pretty boy," she said between sobs. "You said yourself he was a pretty boy."

"Yes," I said. "I reckoned he looked right well."

Grandpa sat in front of a roaring log fire in the front room, reading a copy of *Grit*. I tried to sidle past, but he caught me.

"Aah," he said. "Late again. What excuse this time?"

"Where's Ma?" I said, moving sideways towards the stairs.

"She's out freezing her tail, tying pieces of suet meat to the juniper bushes. She thinks she's got to keep all the sparrows alive until they can get at my crops next summer."

I rushed up the stairs to my room, where I changed my dress, brushed my frizzy hair down flat, and washed the stubble scratches on my legs. All the time I kept thinking of Grandpa's talk about next summer . . . Next summer. The words had the sound of bells ringing. But next summer was a million years away.

All through supper I sat silent, picking at my food, dreading for the moment to come. Finally Grandpa wiped the buttermilk from his whiskers and pushed his chair back.

"Well, let's hear what you learned at school today," he said.

Then I began to cry.

TELL ME A RIDDLE

BY TILLIE OLSEN

*F*OR FORTY-SEVEN years they had been married. How deep back the stubborn, gnarled roots of the quarrel reached, no one could say — but only now, when tending to the needs of others no longer shackled them together, the roots swelled up visible, split the earth between them, and the tearing shook even to the children, long since grown.

Why now, why now? wailed Hannah.

As if when we grew up weren't enough, said Paul.

Poor Ma. Poor Dad. It hurts so for both of them, said Vivi. They never had very much, at least in old age they should be happy.

Knock their heads together, insisted Sammy, tell 'em: you're too old for this kind of thing; no reason not to get along now.

Lenny wrote to Clara: They've lived over so much together; what could possibly tear them apart?

Something tangible enough.

Arthritic hands, and such work as he got, occasional. Poverty all his life, and there was little breath left for the running. He could not, could not turn away from this desire: to have the troubling of responsibility, the fretting with money, over and done with; to be free, to be *carefree* where success was not measured by accumulation, and there was use for the vitality still in him.

There was a way. They could sell the house, and with the money join his lodge's Haven, cooperative for the aged. Happy communal

life, and was he not already an official; had he not helped organize it, raise funds, served as a trustee?

But she — would not consider it.

“What do we need all this for?” he would ask loudly, for her hearing aid was turned down and the vacuum was shrilling. “Five rooms” (pushing the sofa so she could get into the corner) “furniture” (smoothing down the rug) “floors and surfaces to make work. Tell me, why do we need it?” And he was glad he could ask in a scream.

“Because I’m use’t.”

“Because you’re use’t. This is a reason, Mrs. Word Miser? Used to can get unused!”

“Enough unused I have to get used to . . . Not enough words?” turning off the vacuum a moment to hear herself answer. “Because soon enough we’ll need only a little closet, no windows, no furniture, no rooms, nothing to make work but for worms. Now, while I can, I want room . . . Screech and blow like you’re doing, you’ll need that closet even sooner . . . Ha, again!” for the vacuum bag wailed, puffed half up, hung stubbornly limp. “This time fix it so it stays; quick before the phone rings and you get too important-busy.”

But while he struggled with the motor, it seethed in him. Why fix it? Why have to bother? And if it can’t be fixed, have to wring the mind with how to pay the repair? At the Haven they come in with their own machines to clean your room or your cottage; you fish, or play cards, or make jokes in the sun, not with knotty fingers fight to mend vacuums.

Over the dishes, coaxingly: “For once in your life, to be free, to have everything done for you, like a queen.”

“I never liked queens.”

“No dishes, no garbage, no towel to sop, no worry what to buy, what to eat.”

“And what else would I do with my empty hands? Better to eat at my own table when I want, and to cook and eat how I want.”

“In the cottages they buy what you ask, and cook it how you like. *You* are the one who always used to say: better mankind born without mouths and stomachs than always to worry for money to buy, to have to shop, to fix, to cook, to wash, to clean.”

“How cleverly you hid that you heard. I said it then because

eighteen hours a day I ran. And you never scraped a carrot or knew a dish towel sops. Now — for you and me — who cares? A herring out of a jar is enough. But when *I* want, and nobody to bother.” And she turned off her ear button, so she would not have to hear.

But as *he* had no peace, juggling and rejuggling the money to figure: how will I pay for this now?; prying out the storm windows (there they take care of this); jolting in the streetcar on errands (there I would not have to ride to take care of this or that); fending the patronizing of relatives just back from Florida (there it matters what one is, not what one can afford), he gave *her* no peace.

“Look! In their bulletin. A reading circle. Twice a week it meets.”

“Haumm,” her answer of not listening.

“A reading circle. Chekhov they read that you like, and Peretz. Cultured people at the Haven that you would enjoy.”

“Enjoy!” She tasted the word. “Now, when it pleases you, you find a reading circle for me. And forty years ago when the children were morsels and there was a Circle, did you stay home with them once so I could go? Even once? You trained me well. I do not need others to enjoy. Others!” Her voice trembled. “Because *you* want to be there with them. Already it makes me sick to think of you always around others. Clown, grimacer, floormat, yesman, entertainer, whatever they want of you.” And now it was he who turned on the television loud so he need not hear.

Old scar tissue ruptured and the wounds festered anew. Chekhov indeed. She thought without softness of that young wife, who in the deep night hours while she nursed the current baby, and perhaps held another in her lap, would try to stay awake for the only time there was to read. She would feel again the weather of the outside on his cheek when, coming late from a meeting, he would find her so, and stimulated and ardent, sniffing her skin, coax: “I’ll put the baby to bed, and you — put the book away, don’t read, don’t read.”

That had been the most beguiling of all the “don’t read, put your book away” her life had been. Chekhov indeed!

“Money?” She shrugged him off. “Could we get poorer than once we were? And in America, who starves?”

But as still he pressed: "Let me alone about money. Was there ever enough? Seven little ones — for every penny I had to ask — and sometimes, remember, there was nothing. But always *I* had to manage. Now *you* manage. Rub your nose in it good."

But from those years she had had to manage, old humiliations and terrors rose up, lived again, and forced her to relive them. The children's needings; that grocer's face or this merchant's wife she had had to beg credit from when credit was a disgrace, the scenery of the long blocks walked around when she could not pay; school coming, and the desperate going over the old to see what could yet be remade; the soups of meat bones begged "for the dog" one winter . . .

Enough. Now they had no children. Let *him* wrack his head for how they would live. She would not exchange her solitude for anything. *Never again to be forced to move to the rhythms of others.*

For in this solitude she had won to a reconciled peace.

Tranquillity from having the empty house no longer an enemy, for it stayed clean — not as in the days when it was her family, the life in it, that had seemed the enemy: tracking, smudging, littering, dirtying, engaging her in endless defeating battle — and on whom her endless defeat had been spewed.

The few old books, memorized from rereading; the pictures to ponder (the magnifying glass superimposed on her heavy eyeglasses). Or if she wishes, when he is gone, the phonograph, that if she turns up very loud and strains, she can hear: the ordered sounds, and the struggling.

Out in the garden, growing things to nurture. Birds to be kept out of the pear tree, and when the pears are heavy and ripe, the old fury of work, for all must be canned, nothing wasted.

And her one social duty (for she will not go to luncheons or meetings) the boxes of old clothes left with her, as with a life-practiced eye for finding what is still wearable within the worn (again the magnifying glass superimposed on the heavy glasses) she scans and sorts — this for rag or rummage, that for mending and cleaning, and this for sending abroad.

Being able at last to live within, and not move to the rhythms of others, as life had helped her to: removing; denying; isolating; tak-

ing the children one by one; then deafening, half blinding — and at last, presenting her solitude.

And in it she had won to a reconciled peace.

Now he was violating it with his constant campaigning: *Sell the house and move to the Haven.* (You sit, you sit — there too you could sit like a stone.) He was making of her a battleground where old grievances tore. (Turn on your ear button — I am talking.) And stubbornly she resisted — so that from wheedling, reasoning, manipulation, it was bitterness he now started with.

And it came to where every happening lashed up a quarrel.

"I will sell the house anyway," he flung at her one night. "I am putting it up for sale. There'll be a way to make you sign."

The television blared, as always it did on the evenings he stayed home, and as always it reached her only as noise. She did not know if the tumult was in her or outside. Snap! she turned the sound off. "Shadows," she whispered to him, pointing to the screen, "look, it is only shadows." And in a scream: "Did you say you will sell the house? Look at me, not at that. I am no shadow. You cannot sell without me."

"Leave on the television. I am watching."

"Like Paulie, like Jenny, a four-year-old. Staring at shadows. *You cannot sell the house.*"

"I will. We are going to the Haven. There you would not have the television when you do not want it. I could sit in the social room and watch. You could lock yourself up to smell your unpleasantness in a room by yourself — for who would want to come near you?"

"No, no selling." A whisper now.

"The television is shadows. Mrs. Enlightened! Mrs. Cultured! A world comes into your house — and it is shadows. People you would never meet in a thousand lifetimes. Wonders. When you were four years old, yes, like Paulie, like Jenny, did you know of Indian dances, alligators, how they use bamboo in Malaya? No, you scratched in your dirt with the chickens and thought Olshana was the world. Yes, Mrs. Unpleasant, I will sell the house, for there better can we be rid of each other than here."

She did not know if the tumult was outside, or in her. Always a ravening inside, a pull to the bed, to lie down, to succumb.

"Have you thought maybe Ma should let a doctor have a look at her?" asked their son Paul after Sunday dinner, regarding his mother crumpled on the couch, instead of, as was her custom, busying herself in Nancy's kitchen.

"Why not the President too?"

"Seriously, Dad. This is the third Sunday she's lain down like that after dinner. Is she that way at home?"

"A regular love affair with the bed. Every time I start to talk to her."

Good protective reaction, observed Nancy to herself. The workings of hos-ti-lity.

"Nancy could take her. I just don't like how she looks. Let's have Nancy arrange an appointment."

"You think she'll go?" regarding his wife gloomily. "All right, we have to have doctor bills, we have to have doctor bills." Loudly: "Something hurts you?"

She startled, looked to his lips. He repeated: "Mrs. Take It Easy, something hurts?"

"Nothing . . . Only you."

"A woman of honey. That's why you're lying down?"

"Soon I'll get up to do the dishes, Nancy."

"Leave them, Mother, I like it better this way."

"Mrs. Take It Easy, Paul says you should start ballet. You should go see a doctor and ask: how soon can you start ballet?"

"A doctor?" she begged. "Ballet?"

"We were talking, Ma," explained Paul, "you don't seem any too well. It would be a good idea for you to see a doctor for a check-up."

"I get up now to do the kitchen. Doctors are bills and foolishness, my son. I need no doctors."

"At the Haven," he could not resist pointing out, "a doctor is *not* bills. He lives beside you. You start to sneeze, he is there before you open up a Kleenex. You can be sick there for free, all you want."

"Diarrhea of the mouth, is there a doctor to make you dumb?"

"Ma. Promise me you'll go. Nancy will arrange it."

"It's all of a piece when you think of it," said Nancy, "the way she attacks my kitchen, scrubbing under every cup hook, doing the

inside of the oven so I can't enjoy Sunday dinner, knowing half blind or not, she's going to find every speck of dirt . . ."

"Don't, Nancy, I've told you — it's the only way she knows to be useful. What did the *doctor* say?"

"A real fatherly lecture. Sixty-nine is young these days. Go out, enjoy life, find interests. Get a new hearing aid, this one is antiquated. Old age is sickness only if one makes it so. Geriatrics, Inc."

"So there was nothing physical."

"Of course there was. How can you live to yourself like she does without there being? Evidence of a kidney disorder, and her blood count is low. He gave her a diet, and she's to come back for follow-up and lab work . . . But he was clear enough: Number One prescription — start living like a human being. When I think of your dad who could really play the invalid with that arthritis of his, as active as a teen-ager, and twice as much fun . . ."

"You didn't tell me the doctor says your sickness is in you, how you live." He pushed his advantage. "Life and enjoyments you need better than medicine. And this diet, how can you keep it? To weigh each morsel and scrape away the bits of fat to make this soup, that pudding. There, at the Haven, they have a dietician, they would do it for you."

She is silent.

"You would feel better there, I know it," he says gently. "There there is life and enjoyments all around."

"What is the matter, Mr. Importantbusy, you have no card game or meeting you can go to?" — turning her face to the pillow.

For a while he cut his meetings and going out, fussed over her diet, tried to wheedle her into leaving the house, brought in visitors:

"I should come to a fashion tea. I should sit and look at pretty babies in clothes I cannot buy. This is pleasure?"

"Always you are better than everyone else. The doctor said you should go out. Mrs. Brem comes to you with goodness and you turn her away."

"Because *you* asked her to, she asked me."

"They won't come back. People you need, the doctor said. Your

own cousins I asked; they were willing to come and make peace as if nothing had happened . . .”

“No more crushers of people, pushers, hypocrites, around me. No more in *my* house. You go to them if you like.”

“Kind he is to visit. And you, like ice.”

“A babbler. All my life around babblers. Enough!”

“She’s even worse, Dad? Then let her stew awhile,” advised Nancy. “You can’t let it destroy you; it’s a psychological thing, maybe too far gone for any of us to help.”

So he let her stew. More and more she lay silent in bed, and sometimes did not even get up to make the meals. No longer was the tongue-lashing inevitable if he left the coffee cup where it did not belong, or forgot to take out the garbage or mislaid the broom. The birds grew bold that summer and for once, pocked the pears, undisturbed.

A bellyful of bitterness, and every day the same quarrel in a new way and a different old grievance the quarrel forced her to enter and relive. And the new torment: I am not really sick, the doctor said it, then why do I feel so sick?

One night she asked him: “You have a meeting tonight? Do not go. Stay . . . with me.”

He had planned to watch “This Is Your Life” anyway, but half sick himself from the heavy heat, and sickening therefore the more after the brooks and woods of the Haven, with satisfaction he grated: “Hah, Mrs. Live Alone And Like It wants company all of a sudden. It doesn’t seem so good the time of solitary when she was a girl exile in Siberia. ‘Do not go. Stay with me.’ A new song for Mrs. Free As a Bird. Yes, I am going out, and while I am gone chew this aloneness good. Think how you keep us both from where if you want people you do not need to be alone.”

“Go, go. All your life you have gone without me.”

After him she sobbed curses he had not heard in years, old country curses from their childhood: Grow, oh shall you grow like an onion, with your head in the ground. Like the hide of a drum shall you be, beaten in life, beaten in death. Oh shall you be like a chan-delier, to hang, and to burn . . .

She was not in their bed when he came back. She lay on the cot on the sun porch. All week she did not speak or come near him; nor did he try to make peace or care for her.

He slept badly, so used to her next to him. After all the years, old harmonies and dependencies deep in their bodies; she curled to him, or he coiled to her, each warmed, warming, turning as the other turned, the nights a long embrace.

It was not the empty bed or the storm that woke him, but a faint singing. *She* was singing. Shaking off the drops of rain, the lightning riving her lifted face, he saw her so; the cot covers on the floor.

"This is a private concert?" he asked. "Come in, you are wet."

"I can breathe now," she answered, "my lungs are rich." Though indeed the sound was hardly a breath.

"Come in, come in." Loosing the bamboo shades. "Look how wet you are." Half helping, half carrying her, still faint-breathing her song.

A Russian love song of fifty years ago.

He had found a buyer, but before he told her, he called together those children who were close enough to come. Paul, of course, Sammy from New Jersey, Hannah from Connecticut, Vivi from Ohio.

With a kindling of energy for her beloved visitors, she arrayed the house, cooked and baked. She was not prepared for the solemn after-dinner conclave, they too probing in and tearing. Her frightened eyes watched from mouth to mouth as each spoke.

His stories were eloquent and funny of her refusal to go back to the doctor; of the scorned invitations; of her stubborn silences or the bile "like a Niagara"; of her contrariness: "If I clean it's no good how I cleaned; if I don't clean, I'm still a master who thinks he has a slave."

("Vinegar he poured on me all his life; I am well marinated; how can I be honey now?")

Deftly he marched in the rightness for moving to the Haven; their money from social security free for visiting the children, not sucked into daily needs and into the house; the activities in the Haven for him; but mostly the Haven for *her*: her health, her

need of care, distraction, amusement, friends who shared her interests.

"This does offer an outlet for Dad," said Paul; "he's always been an active person. And economic peace of mind isn't to be sneezed at, either, I could use a little of that myself."

But when they asked: "And you, Ma, how do you feel about it?" she could only whisper:

"For him it is good. It is not for me. I can no longer live between people."

"You lived all your life *for* people," Vivi cried.

"Not with." Suffering doubly for the unhappiness on her children's faces.

"You have to find some compromise," Sammy insisted. "Maybe sell the house and buy a trailer. After forty-seven years there's surely some way you can find to live in peace."

"There is no help. Different things we need."

"Then live alone!" He could control himself no longer. "I have a buyer for the house. Half the money for you, half for me. Either alone or with me to the Haven. You think I can live any longer as we are doing now?"

"Ma doesn't have to make a decision this minute, however you feel, Dad," Paul said quickly, "and you wouldn't want her to. Let's let it lay a few months, and then talk some more."

"I think I can work it out to take Mother home with me for a while," Hannah said. "You both look terrible, but especially you, Mother. I'm going to ask Phil to have a look at you."

"Sure," cracked Sammy. "What's the use of a doctor husband if you can't get free service out of him once in a while for the family. And absence might make the heart . . . you know."

"There was something after all," Paul told Nancy in a colorless voice. "That was Hannah's Phil calling. Her gall bladder . . . Surgery."

"Her *gall* bladder. If that isn't classic. 'Bitter as gall' — talk of psychosom — "

He stepped closer, put his hand over her mouth and said in the same colorless, plodding voice. "We have to get Dad. They operated at once. The cancer was everywhere, surrounding the liver,

everywhere. They did what they could . . . at best she has a year. Dad . . . we have to tell him."

2

Honest in his weakness when they told him, and that she was not to know. "I'm not an actor. She'll know right away by how I am. Oh that poor woman. I am old too, it will break me into pieces. Oh that poor woman. She will spit on me: 'So my sickness was how I live.' Oh Paulie, how she will be, that poor woman. Only she should not suffer . . . I can't stand sickness, Paulie, I can't go with you."

But went. And play-acted.

"A grand opening and you did not even wait for me . . . A good thing Hannah took you with her."

"Fashion teas I needed. They cut out what tore in me; just in my throat something hurts yet . . . Look! so many flowers, like a funeral. Vivi called, did Hannah tell you? And Lenny from San Francisco, and Clara; and Sammy is coming." Her gnome's face pressed happily into the flowers.

It is impossible to predict in these cases, but once over the immediate effects of the operation, she should have several months of comparative well-being.

The money, where will come the money?

Travel with her, Dad. Don't take her home to the old associations. The other children will want to see her. *The money, where will I wring the money?*

Whatever happens, she is not to know. No, you can't ask her to sign papers to sell the house; nothing to upset her. Borrow instead, then after . . .

I had wanted to leave you each a few dollars to make life easier, as other fathers do. There will be nothing left now. (Failure! you and your "business is exploitation." Why didn't you make it when it could be made? — Is that what you're thinking, Sammy?) Sure she's unreasonable, Dad — but you have to stay with her; if there's to be any happiness in what's left of her life, it depends on you.

Prop me up children, think of me, too. Shuffled, chained with

*her, bitter woman. No Haven, and the little money going . . .
How happy she looks, poor creature.*

The look of excitement. The straining to hear everything (the new hearing aid turned full). Why are you so happy, dying woman?

How the petals are, fold on fold, and the gladioli color. The autumn air.

Stranger grandsons, tall above the little gnome grandmother, the little spry grandfather. Paul in a frenzy of picture-taking before going.

She, wandering the great house. Feeling the books; laughing at the maple shoemaker's bench of a hundred years ago used as a table. The ear turned to music.

"Let us go home. See how good I walk now." "One step from the hospital," he answers, "and she wants to fly. Wait till Doctor Phil says."

"Look — the birds too are flying home. Very good Phil is and will not show it, but he is sick of sickness by the time he comes home." "Mrs. Telepathy, to read minds," he answers, "read mine what it says: when the trunks of medicines become a suitcase, then we will go."

The grandboys, they do not know what to say to us . . . Hannah, she runs around here, there, when is there time for herself?

Let us go home. Let us go home.

Musing; gentleness — *but for the incidents of the rabbi in the hospital, and of the candles of benediction.*

Of the rabbi in the hospital:

Now tell me what happened, Mother.

From the sleep I awoke, Hannah's Phil, and he stands there like a devil in a dream and calls me by name. I cannot hear. I think he prays. Go away please, I tell him, I am not a believer. Still he stands, while my heart knocks with fright.

You scared *him*, Mother. He thought you were delirious.

Who sent him? Why did he come to me?

It is a custom. The men of God come to visit those of their religion they might help. Jew, Protestant, Catholic, the hospital makes up the list for them, and you are on the Jewish list.

Not for rabbis. At once go and make them change. Tell them to write: Born, human; Religion, none.

And of the candles of benediction:

Look how you have upset yourself, Mrs. Excited Over Nothing. Pleasant memories you should leave.

Go in, go back to Hannah and the lights. Two weeks I saw and said nothing. But she asked me.

So what was so terrible? She forgets you never did, she asks you to light the Friday candles and say the benediction like Phil's mother when she visits. If the candles give her pleasure, why shouldn't she have the pleasure?

Not for pleasure she does it. For emptiness. Because his family does. Because all around her do.

That is not a good reason too? But you did not hear her. For heritage, she told you. For the boys, from the past they should have tradition.

Superstition! From the savages, afraid of the dark, of themselves: mumbo words and magic lights to scare away ghosts.

She told you: how it started does not take away the goodness. For centuries, peace in the house it means.

Swindler! does she look back on the terrible centuries? Candles bought instead of bread and stuck into a potato for a candlestick? Religion that stifled and said: in Paradise, woman, you will be the footstool of your husband, and in life — poor chosen Jew — ground under, despised, trembling in cellars. And cremated. And cremated. This is religion's fault? You think you are still an orator of the 1905 revolution? Where are the pills for quieting? Which are they?

Heritage. How have we come from the savages, how no longer to be savages — this to teach. To look back and learn what ennobles man — this to teach. To smash all ghettos that divide man — not to go back, not to go back — this to teach. Learned books in the house, will man live or die, and she gives to her boys — superstition.

Hannah that is so good to you. Take your pill, Mrs. Excited For Nothing, swallow.

Heritage! But when did I have time to teach? Of Hannah I asked only hands to help.

Swallow.

Otherwise — musing; gentleness.

Not to travel. To go home.

The children want to see you. We have to show them you are as thorny a flower as ever.

Not to travel.

Vivi wants you should see her new baby. She sent the tickets — airplane tickets — a Mrs. Roosevelt she wants to make of you. To Vivi's we have to go.

A new baby. How many warm, seductive babies. She holds him stiffly, *away* from her, so that he wails. And a long shudder begins, and the sweat beads on her forehead.

"Hush, shush," croons the grandfather, lifting him back. "You should forgive your grandmamma, little prince, she has never held a baby before, only seen them in glass cases. Hush, shush."

"You're tired, Ma," says Vivi. "The travel and the noisy dinner. I'll take you to lie down."

(A long travel from, to, what the feel of a baby evokes.)

In the airplane, cunningly designed to encase from motion (no wind, no feel of flight), she had sat severely and still, her face turned to the sky through which they cleaved and left no scar.

So this was how it looked, the determining, the crucial sky, and this was how man moved through it, remote above the dwindled earth, the concealed human life. Vulnerable life, that could scar.

A steerage ship in memory shook across a great, circular sea: clustered, ill human beings, and through the thick-stained air, tiny fretting waters in a window round like the airplane's — sun round, moon round. (The round thatched roofs of Olshana.) Eye round — like the smaller window that framed distance the solitary year of exile when only her eyes could travel, and no voice spoke. And the polar winds hurled themselves across snow trackless and endless and white — like the clouds which had closed together below and hidden the earth.

Seeking, striving, journeying closer.

Now they put a baby in her lap. Do not ask me, she would have liked to beg. Enough the worn face of Vivi, the remembered grandchildren. I cannot, cannot . . .

Cannot what? Unnatural grandmother, not able to make herself embrace a baby.

She lay there in the bed of the two little girls, her new hearing

aid turned full, listening to the sound of the children going to sleep, the baby's fretful crying and hushing, the clatter of dishes being washed and put away. They thought she slept. Still she rode on.

It was not that she had not loved her babies, her children. The love — the passion of tending — had risen with the need like a torrent; and like a torrent drowned and immolated all else. But when the need was done — o the power that was lost in the painful damming back and drying up of what still surged but had nowhere to go. Only the thin pulsing left that could not quiet, suffering over lives one felt, but could no longer hold nor help.

On that torrent she had borne them to their own lives, and the riverbed was desert long years now. Not there would she dwell, a memoried wraith. Surely that was not all, surely there was more. Still the springs, the springs were in her seeking. Somewhere an older power that beat for life. Somewhere coherence, transport, meaning. If they would but leave her in the air now still of clamor, in the reconciled solitude to journey to her self.

And they put a baby in her lap. Immediacy to embrace, and the breath of *that* past: warm flesh like this that had claims and nuzzled away all else and with lovely mouths devoured; hot living like an animal — intensely and now; the turning maze; the long drunkenness; the drowning into needing and being needed. Severely she looked back — and the shudder seized her again, and the sweat. Not that way. Not there, not now could she, not yet . . .

And all that visit, she could not touch the baby.

"Daddy, is it the . . . sickness she's like that?" asked Vivi. "I was so glad to be having the baby — for her. I told Tim, it'll give her more happiness than anything, being around a baby again. And she hasn't played with him once."

He was not listening. "Aahh little seed of life, little charmer," he crooned, "Hollywood should see you. A heart of ice you would melt. Kick, kick. The future you'll have for a ball. In 2050 still kick. Kick for your granddaddy then."

Attentive with the older children; sat through their performances (command performance; we command you to be the audience); helped Ann sort autumn leaves to find the best for a school program; listened gravely to Richard tell about his rock collection, while her lips mutely formed the words to remember: *igneous, sedi-*

mentary, metamorphic; looked for missing socks, books and bus tickets; watched the children whoop after their grandfather who knew how to tickle, chuck, lift, toss, do tricks, tell secrets, make jokes, match riddle for riddle. (Tell me a riddle, Grammy. I know no riddles.) Scrubbed sills and woodwork and furniture in every room; folded the laundry; straightened drawers; emptied the heaped baskets waiting for ironing (while he or Vivi or Tim nagged: You're supposed to rest here, you've been sick) but to none tended or gave food — and could not touch the baby.

After a week she said: "Let us go home. Today call about the tickets."

"You have important business, Mrs. Inahurry? The President waits to consult with you?" He shouted, for the fear of the future raced in him. "The clothes are still warm from the suitcase, your children cannot show enough how glad they are to see you, and you want home. There is plenty of time for home. We cannot be with the children at home."

"Blind to around you as always: the little ones sleep four in a room because we take their bed. We are two more people in a house with a new baby, and no help."

"Vivi is happy so. The children should have their grandparents a while, she told to me. I should have my mommy and daddy . . ."

"Babbler and blind. Do you look at her so tired? How she starts to talk and she cries? I am not strong enough yet to help. Let us go home."

(To reconciled solitude.)

For it seemed to her the crowded noisy house was listening to her, listening for her. She could feel it like a great ear pressed under her heart. And everything knocked: quick constant raps: let me in, let me in.

How was it that soft reaching tendrils also became blows that knocked?

Cmon Grandma, I want to show you . . .

Tell me a riddle, Grandma. (*I know no riddles*)

Look Grammy, he's so dumb he can't even find his hands. (Dody and the baby on a blanket over the fermenting autumn mound)

I made it — for you. (Flat paper dolls with aprons that lifted on

scalloped skirts that lifted on flowered pants; hair of yarn and great ringed questioning eyes) (Ann)

Watch me, Grandma. Richard snaking up the tree, hanging exultant, free, with one hand at the top. Below Dody hunching over in pretend-cooking. (Climb too, Dody, climb and look) Be my nap bed, Granny. (The "No!" too late.) Morty's abandoned heaviness, while his fingers ladder up and down her hearing-aid cord to his drowsy chant: eentsiebeentsiespider. (*Children trust*)

It's to start off your own rock collection, Grandma. That's a trilobite fossil, 200 million years old (millions of years on a boy's mouth) and that one's obsidian, black glass.

Knocked and knocked.

Mother, I *told* you the teacher said we had to bring it back all filled out this morning. Didn't you even ask Daddy? Then tell *me* which plan and I'll check it: evacuate or stay in the city or wait for you to come and take me away. (Seeing the look of straining to hear) It's for Disaster, Grandma. (*Children trust*)

Vivi in the maze of the long, the lovely drunkenness. The old old noises: baby sounds, screaming of a mother flayed to exasperation; children quarreling; children playing; singing; laughter.

And Vivi's tears and memories, spilling so fast, half the words not understood.

She had started remembering out loud deliberately, so her mother would know the past was cherished, still lived in her.

Nursing the baby: My friends marvel, and I tell them, oh it's easy to be such a cow. I remember how beautiful my mother seemed nursing my brother, and the milk just flows . . . Was that Davy? It must have been Davy . . .

Lowering a hem: How did you ever . . . when I think how you made everything we wore . . . Tim, just think, seven kids and Mommy sewed everything . . . do I remember you sang while you sewed? That white dress with the red apples on the skirt you fixed over for me, was it Hannah's or Clara's before it was mine?

Washing sweaters: Ma, I'll never forget, one of those days so nice you washed clothes outside; one of the first spring days it must have been. The bubbles just danced up and down while you

scrubbed, and we chased after, and you stopped to show us how to blow our own bubbles with green onion stalks . . . you always . . .

"Strong onion, to still make you cry after so many years," her father said, to turn the tears into laughter.

While Richard bent over his homework: where is it now, do we still have it, the *Book of Martyrs*? It always seemed so, well — exalted, when you'd put it on the round table and we'd all look at it together; there was even a halo from the lamp. The lamp with the beaded fringe you could move up and down; they're in style again, pulley lamps like that, but without the fringe. You know the book I'm talking about, Daddy, the *Book of Martyrs*, the first picture was a bust of Socrates? I wish there was something like that for the children, Mommy, to give them what you . . . (And the tears splashed again)

(What I intended and did not? Stop it, daughter, stop it, leave that time. And he, the hypocrite, sitting there with tears in his eyes too — it was nothing to you then, nothing.)

. . . The time you came to school and I almost died of shame because of your accent and because I knew you knew I was ashamed; how could I? . . . Sammy's harmonica and you danced to it once yes you did you and Davy squealing in your arms . . . That time you bundled us up and walked us down to the railroad station to stay the night 'cause it was heated and we didn't have any coal, that winter of the strike, you didn't think I remembered that, did you, Mommy? . . . How you'd call us out to see the sunsets . . .

Day after day, the spilling memories. Worse now, questions, too. Even the grandchildren: Grandma, in the olden days, when you were little . . .

It was the afternoons that saved.

While they thought she napped, she would leave the mosaic on the wall (of children's drawings, maps, calendars, pictures, Ann's cardboard dolls with their great ringed questioning eyes) and hunch in the girls' closet, on the low shelf where the shoes stood, and the girls' dresses covered.

For that while she would painfully sheathe against the listening house, the tendrils and noises that knocked, and Vivi's spilling memories. Sometimes it helped to braid and unbraided the sashes that dangled, or to trace the pattern on the hoop slips.

Today she had jacks and children under jet trails to forget. Last night, Ann and Dody silhouetted in the window against a sunset of flaming man-made clouds of jet trail, their jacks' ball accenting the peaceful noise of dinner being made. Had she told them, yes she had told them of how they played jacks in her village though there was no ball, no jacks. Six stones, round and flat, toss them out, the seventh on the back of the hand, toss, catch and swoop up as many as possible, toss again . . .

Of stones (repeating Richard) there are three kinds: earth's fire jetting; rock of layered centuries; crucible new out of the old. But there was that other — frozen to black glass, never to transform or hold the fossil memory . . . (let not my seed fall on stone). There was an ancient man who fought to heights a great rock that crashed back down eternally — eternal labor, freedom, labor . . . And you, David, who with a stone slew, screaming: Lord, take my heart of stone and give me flesh.

Who was screaming? Why was she back in the common room of the prison, the sun motes dancing in the shafts of light, and the informer being brought in, a prisoner now, like themselves. And Lisa leaping, yes, Lisa, the gentle and tender, biting at the betrayer's jugular. Screaming and screaming.

No, it is the children screaming. Another of Paul and Sammy's terrible fights?

In Vivi's house. Severely: you are in Vivi's house.

Blows, screams, a call: "Grandma!" For her? Oh please not for her. Hide, hunch behind the dresses deeper. But a trembling little body hurls itself beside her — surprised, smothered laughter — arms surround her neck, tears rub dry on her cheek, and words too soft to understand whisper into her ear (Is this where you hide too, Grammy? It's my secret place, we have a secret now)

And the sweat beads, and the long shudder seizes.

It seemed the great ear pressed inside now, and the knocking. "We have to go home," she told him, "I grow ill here."

"It is your own fault, Mrs. Bodybusy, you do not rest, you do too much." He raged, but the fear was in his eyes. "It was a serious operation, they told you to take care . . . All right, we will go to where you can rest."

But where? Not home to death, not yet. He had thought

to Lenny's, to Clara's; beautiful visits with each of the children. She would have to rest first, be stronger. If they could but go to Florida — it glittered before him the never-realized promise of Florida — California: of course. (The money, the money dwindling!) Los Angeles first for sun and rest, then to Lenny's in San Francisco.

He told her the next day. "You saw what Nancy wrote: snow and wind back home, a terrible winter. And look at you — bones and a swollen belly. I called Phil: he said: 'A prescription, Los Angeles sun and rest.'"

She watched the words on his lips. "You have sold the house," she cried, "that is why we do not go home. That is why you talk no more of the Haven, that is why there is money for travel. After the children you will drag me to the Haven."

"The Haven! Who thinks of the Haven any more? Tell her, Vivi, tell Mrs. Suspicious: a prescription, sun and rest, to make you healthy . . . And how could I sell the house without *you*?"

At the place of farewells and greetings, of winds of coming and winds of going, they say their good-bys.

They look back at her with the eyes of others before them: Richard with her own blue blaze; Ann with the Nordic eyes of Tim; Morty's dreaming brown of a great grandmother he will never know; Dody with the laughing eyes of him who had been her spring-time love (who stands beside her now); Vivi's, all tears.

The baby's eyes are closed in sleep.

Good-by, my children.

3

It is to the back of the great city he brought her, to the dwelling places of the cast-off old. Bounded by two lines of amusement piers to the north and to the south, and between a long straight paving rimmed with black benches facing the sands — sands so wide the ocean is only a far fluting.

In the brief vacation season, some of the boarded stores fronting the sands open, and families, young people and children may be seen. A little tasseled tram shuttles between the piers, and the lights

of roller coasters prink and tweak over those who come to have sensation made in them.

The rest of the year it is abandoned to the old, all else boarded up and still; seemingly empty, except the occasional days and hours when the sun, like a tide, sucks them out of the low rooming houses, casts them onto the benches and sandy rim of the walk — and sweeps them into decaying enclosures back again.

A few newer apartments glint among the low bleached squares. It is in one of these Lenny's Jeannie has arranged their rooms. "Only a few miles north and south people pay hundreds of dollars a month for just this gorgeous air, Granddaddy, just this ocean closeness."

She had been ill on the plane, lay ill for days in the unfamiliar room. Several times the doctor came by — left medicine she would not take. Several times Jeannie drove in the twenty miles from work, still in her Visiting Nurse uniform, the lightness and brightness of her like a healing.

"Who can believe it is winter?" he said one morning. "Beautiful it is outside like an ad. Come, Mrs. Invalid, come to taste it. You are well enough to sit in here, you are well enough to sit outside. The doctor said it too."

But the benches were encrusted with people, and the sands at the sidewalk's edge. Besides, she had seen the far ruffle of the sea: "there take me," and though she leaned against him, it was she who led.

Plodding and plodding, sitting often to rest, he grumbling. Patting the sand so warm. Once she scooped up a handful, cradling it close to her better eye; peered, and flung it back. And as they came almost to the brink and she could see the glistening wet, she sat down, pulled off her shoes and stockings, left him and began to run. "You'll catch cold," he screamed, but the sand in his shoes weighed him down — he who had always been the agile one — and already the white spray creamed her feet.

He pulled her back, took a handkerchief to wipe off the wet and the sand. "Oh no," she said, "the sun will dry," seized the square and smoothed it flat, dropped on it a mound of sand, knotted the kerchief corners and tied it to a bag — "to look at with the strong glass" (for the first time in years she explained an action of hers) —

and lay down with the little bag against her cheek, looking toward the shore that nurtured life as it first crawled toward consciousness the million years ago.

He took her one Sunday in the evil-smelling bus, past flat miles of blister houses, to the home of relatives. Oh what is this? she cried as the light began to smoke and the houses to dim and recede. Smog, he said, everyone knows but you . . . Outside he kept his arms about her, but she walked with hands pushing the heavy air as if to open it, whispered: who has done this?, sat down suddenly to vomit at the curb and for a long while refused to rise.

One's age as seen on the altered face of those known in youth. Is this they he has come to visit? This Max and Rose, smooth and pleasant, introducing them to polite children, disinterested grandchildren, "the whole family, once a month on Sundays. And why not? We have the room, the help, the food."

Talk of cars, of houses, of success: this son that, that daughter this. And *your* children? Hastily skimmed over, the intermarriages, the obscure work — "my doctor son-in-law, Phil" — all he has to offer. She silent in a corner. (Carsick like a baby, he explains.) Years since he has taken her to visit anyone but the children, and old apprehensions prick: "no incidents," he silently begs, "no incidents." He itched to tell them: "A very sick woman," he said significantly, indicating her with his eyes, "a very sick woman." Their restricted faces did not react. "Have you thought maybe she'd do better at Palm Springs?" Rose asked. "Or at least a nicer section of the beach, nicer people, a pool." Not to have to say "money" he said instead: "would she have sand to look at through a magnifying glass?" and went on, detail after detail, the old habit betraying of parading the queerness of her for laughter.

After dinner — the others into the living room in men- or women-clusters, or into the den to watch TV — the four of them alone. She sat close to him, and did not speak. Jokes, stories, people they had known, beginning of reminiscence, Russia fifty — sixty years ago. Strange words across the Duncan Phyfe table: *hunger; secret meetings; human rights; spies; betrayals; prison; escape* — interrupted by one of the grandchildren: "Commercial's on; any coke left? Gee, you're missing a real hair-raiser." And then a grand-

daughter (Max proudly: "look at her, an American queen") drove them home on her way back to UCLA. No incident — except that there had been no incidents.

The first few mornings she had taken with her the magnifying glass, but he would sit only on the benches, so she rested at the foot, where slatted bench shadows fell, and unless she turned her hearing aid down, other voices invaded.

Now on the days when the sun shone and she felt well enough, he took her on the tram to where the benches ranged in oblongs, some with tables for checkers or cards. Again the blanket on the sand in the striped shadows, but she no longer brought the magnifying glass. He played cards, and she lay in the sun and looked toward the waters; or they walked — two blocks down to the scaling hotel, two blocks back — past chili-hamburger stands, open-doored bars, Next to New and Perpetual Rummage Sale stores.

Once, out of the aimless walkers, slow and shuffling like themselves, someone ran unevenly toward them, embraced, kissed, wept: "dear friends, old friends." A friend of *hers*, not his: Mrs. Mays who had lived next door to them in Denver when the children were small.

Thirty years are compressed into a dozen sentences; and the present, not even in three. All is told: the children scattered; the husband dead; she lives in a room two blocks up from the sing hall — and points to the domed auditorium jutting before the pier. The leg? phlebitis; the heavy breathing? that one does not ask. She too comes to the benches each nice day to sit. And tomorrow, tomorrow, are they going to the community sing? Of course he would have heard of it, everybody goes — the big doings they wait for all week. They have never been? She will come to them for dinner tomorrow and they will all go together.

So it is that she sits in the wind of the singing, among the thousand various faces of age.

She had turned off her hearing aid at once they came into the auditorium — as she would have wished to turn off sight.

One by one they streamed by and imprinted on her — and though the savage zest of their singing came voicelessly soft and distant, the faces roared — the faces densened the air — seeded

children-chants, mother-croons, singing of the chained;
 love serenades, Beethoven storms, mad Lucia's scream;
 drunken joy-songs, keens for the dead, work singing
 while from floor to balcony to dome a barefooted sore-covered
 little girl threaded the sound-thronged tumult, danced her
 ecstasy of grimace to flutes that scratched at a crossroads vil-
 lage wedding

Yes, faces became sound, and the sound became faces; and faces and
sound became weight — pushed pressed.

"Air" — her hand claws his.

"Whenever I enjoy myself . . ." Then he saw the gray sweat on her face. "Here. Up. Help me, Mrs. Mays," and they support her out to where she can gulp the air in sob after sob.

"A doctor, we should get for her a doctor."

"Tch, it's nothing," says Ellen Mays, "I get it all the time . . . You've missed the tram; come to my place . . . close . . . tea. My view. See, she *wants* to come. Steady now, that's how." Adding mysteriously: "Remember your advice, easy to keep your head above water, empty things float. Float."

The singing a fading march for them, tall woman with a swollen leg, weaving little man, and the swollen thinness they help between.

The stench in the hall: mildew? decay? "We sit and rest then climb. My gorgeous view. We help each other and here we are."

The stench along into the slab of room. A washstand for a sink, a box with oilcloth tacked round for a cupboard, a three-burner gas plate. Artificial flowers, colorless with dust. Everywhere pictures foaming: wedding, baby, party, vacation, graduation, family, pictures. From the narrow couch under a slit of window, sure enough the view: lurching rooftops and a scallop of ocean heaving, preening, twitching under the moon.

"While the water heats. Excuse me . . . down the hall." Ellen Mays has gone.

"You'll live?" he asks mechanically, sat down to feel his fright; tried to pull her alongside.

She pushed him away. "For air," she said; stood clinging to the dresser. Then, in a terrible voice: After a lifetime of room. Of many rooms.

Shhh

You remember how she lived. Eight children. And now one room like a coffin. Shrinking the life of her into one room

She pays rent!

Like a coffin. Rooms and rooms like this. I lie on the quilt and hear them talk. Once you went for coffee I walked I saw A Balzac a Chekhov to write it. Rummage Alone On scraps

Shhh Mrs. Orator Without Breath. Better here old than in the old country.

And they sang like . . . like . . . Wondrous. *Man, one has to believe.* So strong. For what? To rot, not grow?

Your poor lungs beg you: *Please.* They sob between each word.

Singing. Unused the life in them. She in this poor room with her pictures. Max You The children. Everywhere. And who has meaning? Century after century still all in man not to grow?

Coffins, rummage, plants: sick woman. O lay down. We will get for you the doctor.

"And when will it end. Oh, *the end.*" *That* nightmare thought, and this time she writhed, crumpled beside him, seized his hand (for a moment again the weight, the soft distant roaring of humanity) and on the strangled-for breath, begged: "Man . . . will destroy ourselves?"

And looking for answer — in the helpless pity and fear for her (for *her*) that distorted his face — she understood the last months, and knew that she was dying.

4

"Let us go home," she said after several days.

"You are in training for a cross-country trip? That is why you do not even walk across the room? Here, like a prescription Phil said, till you are stronger from the operation. You want to break doctor's orders?"

She saw the fiction was necessary to him, was silent; then: "At home I will get better. If the doctor here says?"

"And winter? And the visits to Lenny and to Clara? All right," for he saw the tears in her eyes, "I will write Phil, and talk to the doctor."

Days passed. He reported nothing. Jeannie came and took her out for air, past the boarded concessions, the hooded and tented

amusement rides, to the end of the pier. They watched the spent waves feeding the new; the gulls in the clouded sky; even up where they sat, the windblown sand stung.

She did not ask to go down the crooked steps to the sea.

Back in her bed, while he was gone to the store, she said: "Jeannie, this doctor, he is not one I can ask questions. Ask him for me, can I go home?"

Jeannie looked at her, said quickly: "Of course, poor Granny, you want your own things around you, don't you? I'll call him to-night . . . Look, I've something to show you," and from her purse unwrapped a large cookie, intricately shaped like a little girl. "Look at the curls — can you hear me well, Granny? — and the darling eyelashes. I just came from a house where they were baking them."

"The dimples," she marveled, "there in the knees," holding it to the better light, turning, studying, "like art. Each singly they cut, or a mold?"

"Singly," said Jeannie, "and if it is a child only the mother can make them. Oh Granny, it's the likeness of a real little girl who died yesterday — Rosita. She was three years old. *Pan del Muerto*, the Bread of the Dead. It was the custom in the part of Mexico they came from."

Still she turned and inspected. "Look, the hollow in the throat, the little cross necklace . . . I think for the mother it is a good thing to be busy with such bread. You know the family?"

Jeannie nodded. "On my rounds. I nursed . . . Oh Granny, it is like a party; they play songs she liked to dance to. The coffin is lined with pink velvet and she wears a white dress. There are candles . . ."

"In the house?" Surprised, "They keep her in the house?"

"Yes," said Jeannie, "and it is against the health law. I think she is . . . prepared there. The father said it will be sad to bury her here; in Mazatlán they have a feast night with candles each year; everyone picnics on the graves of those they loved until dawn."

"Yes Jeannie, the living must comfort themselves." And closed her eyes.

"You want to sleep, Granny?"

"Yes, tired from the pleasure of you. I may keep the Rosita? There stand it, on the dresser, where I can see; something of my own around me."

In the kitchenette, helping her grandfather unpack the groceries, Jeannie said in her light voice:

"I'm resigning my job, Granddaddy."

"Ah the lucky young man. Which one is he?"

"Too late. You're spoken for." She made a pyramid of cans, unstacked, and built again.

"Something is wrong with the job?"

"With me. I can't be" — she searched for the word — "professional enough. I let myself feel things. And tomorrow I have to report a family . . ." The cans clicked again. "It's not that, either. I just don't know what I want to do, maybe go back to school, maybe go to art school. I thought if you went to San Francisco I'd come along and talk it over with Mommy and Daddy. But I don't see how you can go. She wants to go home. She asked me to ask the doctor."

The doctor told her himself. "Next week you may travel, when you are a little stronger." But next week there was the fever of an infection, and by the time that was over, she could not leave the bed — a rented hospital bed that stood beside the double bed he slept in alone now.

Outwardly the days repeated themselves. Every other afternoon and evening he went out to his new-found cronies, to talk and play cards. Twice a week, Mrs. Mays came. And the rest of the time, Jeannie was there.

By the sickbed stood Jeannie's FM radio. Often into the room the shapes of music came. She would lie curled on her side, her knees drawn up, intense in listening (Jeannie sketched her so, coiled, convoluted like an ear), then thresh her hand out and abruptly snap the radio mute — still to lie in her attitude of listening, concealing tears.

Once Jeannie brought in a young Marine to visit, a friend from high school days she had found wandering near the empty pier. Because Jeannie asked him to, gravely, without self-consciousness, he sat himself cross-legged on the floor and performed for them a dance of his native Samoa.

Long after they left, a tiny thrumming sound could be heard where, in her bed, she strove to repeat the beckon, flight, surrender of his hands, the fluttering footbeats, and his low plaintive calls.

Hannah and Phil sent flowers. To deepen her pleasure, he placed one in her hair. "Like a girl," he said and brought the hand mirror so she could see. She looked at the pulsing red flower, the yellow skull face; a desolate, excited laugh shuddered from her, and she pushed the mirror away — but let the flower burn.

The week Lenny and Helen came, the fever returned. With it the excited laugh, and incessant words. She, who in her life had spoken but seldom and then only when necessary (never having learned the easy, social uses of words), now, in dying, spoke incessantly.

In a half whisper: "Like Lisa she is, your Jeannie. Have I told you of Lisa, she who taught me to read? Of the high-born she was, but noble in herself. I was sixteen; they beat me; my father beat me so I would not go to her. It was forbidden, she was a Tolstoyan. At night, past dogs that howled, terrible dogs my son, in the snows of winter to the road, I to ride in her carriage like a lady to books. To her life was holy, knowledge was holy, and she taught me to read. They hung her. Everything that happens one must try to understand why. She killed one who betrayed many. Because of betrayal, betrayed all she lived and believed. In one minute she killed, before my eyes, in prison with me. All that happens, one must try to understand why.

"The name?" Her lips would work. "The name that was their pole star; the doors of the death houses fixed to open on it; I read of it my year of penal servitude. Thuban!" very excited, "Thuban, in ancient Egypt the pole star. Can you see, look out to see it, Jeannie, if it swings around our pole star that seems to *us* not to move.

"Yes, Jeannie, at your age my mother and grandmother had already buried children . . . yes, Jeannie, it is more than oceans between Olshana and you . . . yes, Jeannie, and for all the bodies they had they might as well be chickens, and indeed, they flapped their arms and hopped.

"And Andrei Yefimitch, who for twenty years had never known of it and never wanted to know, said as if he wanted to cry: but why my dear friend this malicious laughter?" Telling to herself half memorized phrases from her few books. "Pain I answer with tears and cries, baseness with indignation, meanness with repulsion . . . for life may be hated or wearied of, but never despised."

Delirious: "Tell me, my neighbor, Mrs. Mays, the pictures never lived, but what of the flowers? Tell them who ask: no rabbis, no

ministers, no priests, no speeches, no ceremonies: ah, false — let the living please themselves. Tell Sammy's boy, he who flies, tell him to go to Stuttgart and see where Davy has no grave. And what?" A conspirator's laugh. "And what? where millions have no graves."

In delirium or not, wanting the radio on; not seeming to listen, the words still jetting, wanting the music on. Once, silencing it abruptly as of old, she began to cry, unconcealed tears this time. "You have pain, Granny?" Jeannie asked.

"The music," she said, "still it is there yet we do not hear; knocks, and our poor human ears too weak. What else, what else we do not hear?"

Once she knocked his hand aside as he gave her a pill, swept the bottles from her bedside table: "no pills, let me feel what I feel," and laughed as on his hands and knees he groped to pick them up.

Nighttimes her hand reached across the bed to hold his.

A constant retching began. Her breath was too faint for sustained speech now, but still the lips moved:

When no longer necessary to injure others

Pick pick pick Blind chicken

As a human being responsibility for

"David!" imperious, "Basin!" and she would vomit, rinse her mouth, the wasted throat working to swallow, and begin the chant again.

She will be better off in the hospital now, the doctor said.

He sent the telegrams to the children, was packing her suitcase, when her hoarse voice startled. She had roused, was pulling herself to sitting.

"Where now?" she asked. "Where now do you drag me?"

"You do not even have to have a baby to go this time," he soothed, looking for the brush to pack. "Remember, after Davy you told me — worthy to have a baby for the pleasure of the hospital?"

"Where now? Not home yet?" Her voice mourned. "Where is my home?"

He rose to ease her back. "The doctor, the hospital," he started to explain, but deftly, like a snake, she had slithered out of bed and stood swaying, propped behind the night table.

"Coward," she hissed, "runner."

"You stand," he said senselessly.

"To take me there and run. Afraid of a little vomit."

He reached her as she fell. She struggled against him, slipped from his arms, pulled herself up again.

"Weakling," she taunted, "to leave me there and run. Betrayer. All your life you have run."

He sobbed, telling Jeannie. "A Marilyn Monroe to run for her virtue. Fifty-nine pounds she weighs, the doctor said, and she beats at me like a Dempsey. Betrayer, she cries, and I running like a dog when she calls; day and night, running to her, her vomit, the bed-pan . . ."

"She wants you, Granddaddy," said Jeannie. "Isn't that what they call love? I'll see if she sleeps, and if she does, poor worn-out darling, we'll have a party, you and I; I brought us rum babas."

They did not move her. By her bed now stood the tall hooked pillar that held the solutions — blood and dextrose — to feed her veins. Jeannie moved down the hall to take over the sickroom, her face so radiant, her grandfather asked her once: "you are in love?" (Shameful the joy, the pure overwhelming joy from being with her grandmother; the peace, the serenity that breathed.) "My darling escape," she answered incoherently, "my darling Granny," — as if that explained.

Now one by one the children came, those that were able. Hannah, Paul, Sammy. Too late to ask: and what did you learn with your living, Mother, and what do we need to know?

Clara, the eldest, clenched:

Pay me back, Mother, pay me back for all you took from me. Those others you crowded into your heart. The hands I needed to be for you, the heaviness, the responsibility.

Is this she? Noises the dying make, the crablike hands crawling over the covers. The ethereal singing.

She hears that music, that singing from childhood; forgotten sound — not heard since, since . . . And the hardness breaks like a cry: Where did we lose each other, first mother, singing mother?

Annulled: the quarrels, the gibing, the harshness between; the fall into silence and the withdrawal.

I do not know you, Mother. Mother, I never knew you.

Lenny, suffering not alone for her who was dying, but for that in her which never lived (for that which in him might never live). From him too, unspoken words: *goodbye mother who taught me to mother myself.*

Not Vivi, who must stay with her children; not Davy, but he is already here, having to die again with *her* this time, for the living take their dead with them when they die.

Light she grew, like a bird, and like a bird, sound bubbled in her throat while the body fluttered in agony. Night and day, asleep or awake (though indeed there was no difference now) the songs and the phrases leaping.

And he, who had once dreaded a long dying (from fear of himself, from horror of the dwindling money) now desired her quick death profoundly, for *her* sake. He no longer went out, except when Jeannie forced him; no longer laughed, except when, in the bright kitchenette, Jeannie coaxed his laughter (and she, who seemed to hear nothing else, would laugh too, conspiratorial wisps of laughter).

Light, like a bird, the fluttering body, the little claw hands, the beaked shadow on her face; and the throat, bubbling, straining:

He tried not to listen, as he tried not to look on the face in which only the forehead remained familiar, but trapped with her the long nights in that little room, the sounds worked themselves into his consciousness, with their punctuation of death swallows, whimpers, gurglings.

Even in reality (swallow) life's lack of it

The bell Summon what ennobles

78,000 in one minute (whisper of a scream) 78,000 human beings destroy ourselves?

"Ahh Mrs. Miserable," he said, as if she could hear, "all your life working, and now in bed you lie, servants to tend, you do not even need to call to be tended, and still you work. Such hard work it is to die? Such hard work?"

The body threshed, her hand clung in his. A melody, ghost thin,

hovered on her lips, and like a guilty ghost, the vision of her bent in listening to it, silencing the record instantly he was near. Now, heedless of his presence, she floated the melody on and on.

"Hid it from me," he complained, "how many times you listened to remember it so?" And tried to think when she had first played it, or first begun to silence her few records when he came near — but could reconstruct nothing. There was only this room with its tall hooked pillar and its swarm of sounds.

*An unexamined life not worth
Strong with the not yet in the now
Dogma dead war dead one country*

"It helps, Mrs. Philosopher, words from books? It helps?" And it seemed to him that for seventy years she had hidden a tape recorder, infinitely microscopic, within her, that it had coiled infinite mile on mile, trapping every song, every melody, every word read, heard and spoken — and that maliciously she was playing back only what said nothing of him, of the children, of their intimate life together.

"Left us indeed, Mrs. Babblor," he reproached, "you who called others babblor and cunningly saved your words. A lifetime you tended and loved, and now not a word of us, for us. Left us indeed? Left me."

And he took out his solitaire deck, shuffled the cards loudly, slapped them down.

*Lift high banner of reason (tatter of an orator's voice)
Justice freedom and light
Mankind life worthy heroic capacities
Seeks (blur of shudder) belong human being*

"Words, words," he accused, "and what human beings did *you* seek around you, Mrs. Live Alone, and what mankind think worthy?"

Though even as he spoke, he remembered she had not always been isolated, had not always wanted to be alone (as he knew there had been a voice before this gossamer one; before the hoarse voice that broke from silence to lash, make incidents, shame him — a girl's voice of eloquence that spoke their holiest dreams). But again he could reconstruct, image nothing of what had been before, or when, or how, it had changed.

Ace, queen, jack. The pillar shadow fell, so, in two tracks; in the mirror depths glistened a moonlike blob, the empty solution bottle. And it worked in him: *of reason and justice and freedom. Dogma dead*: he remembered the quotation, laughed bitterly. "Hah, good you do not know what you say; good Victor Hugo died and did not see it, his twentieth century."

Deuce, ten, five. Dauntlessly she began a song of their youth of belief:

*These things shall be, a loftier race
than e'er the world hath known shall rise
with flame of freedom in their souls
and light of knowledge in their eyes*

King, four, jack. "In the twentieth century, hah!"

*They shall be gentle, brave and strong
to spill no drop of blood, but dare
all that may plant man's lordship firm
on earth and fire and sea and air*

"To spill no drop of blood, hah! So, cadaver, and you too, cadaver Hugo, 'in the twentieth century ignorance will be dead, dogma will be dead, war will be dead, and for all mankind one country — of fulfillment.' Hah!"

And every life (long strangling cough) *shall be a song*

The cards fell from his fingers. Without warning, the bereavement and betrayal he had sheltered — compounded through the years — hidden even from himself — revealed itself,

uncoiled,
released,
sprung

and with it the monstrous shapes of what had actually happened in the century.

A ravening hunger or thirst seized him. He groped into the kitchenette, switched on all three lights, piled a tray — "you have finished your night snack, Mrs. Cadaver, now I will have mine." And he was shocked at the tears that splashed on the tray.

"Salt tears. For free. I forgot to shake on salt?"

Whispered: "Lost, how much I lost."

Escaped to the grandchildren whose childhoods were childish, who had never hungered, who lived unravaged by disease in warm houses of many rooms, had all the school for which they cared, could walk on any street, stood a head taller than their grandparents, towered above — beautiful skins, straight backs, clear straightforward eyes. “Yes, you in Olshana,” he said to the town of sixty years ago, “they would be nobility to you.”

And was this not the dream then, come true in ways undreamed? he asked.

And are there no other children in the world? he answered, as if in her harsh voice.

And the flame of freedom, the light of knowledge?

And the drop, the drop of blood?

And he thought that at six Jeannie would get up and it would be his turn to go to her room and sleep, that he could press the buzzer and she would come now; that in the afternoon Ellen Mays was coming, and this time they would play cards and he could marvel at how rouge can stand half an inch on the cheek; that in the evening the doctor would come, and he could beg him to be merciful, to stop the feeding solutions, to let her die.

To let her die, and with her their youth of belief out of which her bright, betrayed words foamed; stained words, that on her working lips came stainless.

Hours yet before Jeannie's turn. He could press the buzzer and wake her to come now; he could take a pill, and with it sleep; he could pour more brandy into his milk glass, though what he had poured was not yet touched.

Instead he went back, checked her pulse, gently tended with his knotty fingers as Jeannie had taught.

She was whimpering; her hand crawled across the covers for his. Compassionately he enfolded it, and with his free hand gathered up the cards again. Still was there thirst or hunger ravening in him.

That world of their youth — dark, ignorant, terrible with hate and disease — how was it that living in it, in the midst of corruption, filth, treachery, degradation, they had not mistrusted man nor themselves; had believed so beautifully, so . . . falsely?

“Aaah children,” he said out loud, “how we believed, how we belonged.” And he yearned to package for each of the children,

the grandchildren, for everyone, *that joyous certainty, that sense of mattering, of moving and being moved, of being one and indivisible with the great of the past, with all mankind.* Package it, stand on corners, in front of stadiums and on crowded beaches, knock on doors, give it as a fabled gift.

"And why not in cereal boxes, in soap packages?" he mocked himself. "Aah. You have taken my senses, cadaver."

Words foamed, died unsounded. Her body writhed; she made kissing motions with her mouth. (Her lips moving as she read, poring over the *Book of Martyrs*, the magnifying glass superimposed over the heavy eyeglasses.) *Still she had believed?* "Eva!" he whispered. "Still you believed? You lived by it? These Things Shall Be?"

"One pound soup meat," she answered distinctly, "one soup bone."

"My ears heard you. Ellen Mays was witness: 'Man . . . one has to believe.'" Imploringly: "Eva!"

"Bread, day old." She was mumbling. "Please, in a wooden box . . . for kindling. The thread, hah, the thread breaks. Cheap thread," — and a gurgling, enormously loud, began in her throat.

"I ask for stone; she gives me bread — day old." He pulled his hand away, shouted: "Who wanted questions? Everything you have to wake and take?" Then dully, "Ah let me help you turn, poor creature."

Words jumbled, cleared. In a voice of crowded terror:

"Paul, Sammy, don't fight.

"Hannah, have I ten hands?

"How can I give it, Clara, how can I give it if I don't have?"

"You lie," he said sturdily, "there was joy too." Bitterly: "Ah how cheap you speak of us at the last."

As if to rebuke him, as if her voice had no relationship with her flailing body, she sang clearly, beautifully, a school song the children had taught her when they were little; begged:

"Not look my hair where they cut . . ."

(The crown of braids shorn.) And instantly he left the mute old woman poring over the *Book of Martyrs*; went past the mother treddling at the sewing machine, singing with the children; past the girl in her wrinkled prison dress, hiding her hair with scarred hands,

lifting to him her awkward, shamed, imploring eyes of love; and took her in his arms, dear, personal, fleshed, in all the heavy passion he had loved to rouse from her.

“Eva!”

Her little claw hand beat the covers. How much, how much can a man stand? He took up the cards, put them down, circled the beds, walked to the dresser, opened, shut drawers, brushed his hair, moved his hand bit by bit over the mirror to see what of the reflection he could blot out with each move, and felt that at any moment he would die of what was unendurable. Went to press the buzzer to wake Jeannie, looked down, saw on Jeannie’s sketch pad the hospital bed, with *her*; the double bed alongside, with him; the tall pillar feeding into her veins, and their hands, his and hers, clasped, feeding each other. And as if he had been instructed he went to his bed, lay down, holding the sketch as a shield against the monstrous shapes of loss, of betrayal, of death — and with his free hand took hers back into his.

So Jeannie found them in the morning.

That last day the agony was perpetual. Time after time it lifted her almost off the bed, so they had to fight to hold her down. He could not endure and left the room; wept as if there never would be tears enough.

Jeannie came to comfort him. In her light voice she said: Granddaddy, Granddaddy don’t cry. She is not there, she promised me. On the last day, she said she would go back to when she first heard music, a little girl on the road of the village where she was born. She promised me. It is a wedding — and they dance, while the flutes so joyous and vibrant tremble in the air. Leave her there, Granddaddy, it is all right. She promised me. Come back, come back and help her poor body to die.

NIGHT IN FUNLAND

BY WILLIAM PEDEN

THEY DROVE slowly down the highway that cut cleanly through the desert, past the glittering motels with their swimming pools of pale blue water, past the shops of pink or green or azure adobe. In the humming light of the mercury-vapor lamps, the child was a gnome in a pool of color, the shadows beneath her eyes sooty in the darkness that had overrun the mesa. The father reached over and patted her hand. She squeezed his and edged closer towards him.

"Are you sure this is the way, Daddy?"

"Of course it is, Amanda, don't you remember?"

"Well, yes, sort of, but I thought maybe it was the other way."

"The other way is east, goosie," he said; "we go west. Look, in a minute, at the next stop light, we will see the wheel, and then you will remember."

At the intersection he slowed down as the traffic light clicked from green to amber and then to red.

"Look," he pointed at the rosy sky; "over there; can't you see the top of the Ferris wheel?"

She squealed with delight; then the light changed and they left the shining highway, and in darkness that was like a sudden plunge into unknown waters turned onto a bumpy dirt road.

"Can we get there this way?" Amanda asked. "Does this road go through?"

"Don't worry; sure it does, honey. You just wait."

Then they were pulling into the tumbleweed-speckled parking lot. He switched off the motor, and turned off the lights, and went around and opened her door. Amanda came out slowly, and she smiled up at her spare, slightly stooped father.

"This is fun," she said. She reached for his hand and they walked beneath the arch that spelled out F-U-N-L-A-N-D in winking colored lights. It was a clean bright place, no leg shows, no wheels of fortune, no freak tents with greenish two-headed babies in discolored alcohol-filled jars; a clean bright place on the mesa, bounded by a miniature railroad with puffing steam engine and train of cars. They could hear the whistle now at the far dark end of the park, faraway and thin and clear, and Amanda tugged at his hand again. He wanted to pull her close to him and kiss her and pat her thin hair and tell her how glad he was that she was so much better and they could go on a spree together as they had in the old days, and he patted her hand and buttoned the top button of her sweater.

"Let's sit down a little," he said. His heart was thumping and the palms of his hands were damp.

"Oh Daddy," she said, "not now."

"You must rest a minute," he insisted; "you must remember this is the first time. . . ."

They sat down on the bench by the small depot, and the train with its bell clanging and its whistle shrilling and its headlight stabbing at the night swung around the turn, and stopped quietly almost in front of them. The engineer, a teen-aged boy crouching precariously on the tender, got up to stretch his legs while the young passengers spilled from the coaches.

"What shall we do first?" the father asked. "Do you want to ride the train?"

"I'd like a snowball first," she said; children were climbing on and off the train like monkeys and he thought there were too many of them and one of them might cough on her or something it wouldn't help her, God knows, to catch a cold or something just now. She walked ahead of him slowly, a trace of her old jauntiness in the blue toreadors with the white bows tied neatly just below her knees and the white-trimmed cap on her dark head, past the pool with its boats floating in the oil-dark water, and the enclosure where the ponies awaited their riders, and the clanking fury of the scenic railway.

"This is the nicest park ever," he said, and squeezed her hand. "I have never been in a nicer park, have you, Amanda?"

"No," she said; "it is the nicest ever."

At the refreshment booth he ordered two snowballs, with grape flavoring. The efficient girl in her starched white uniform pushed a button and there was a whirling sound, and the ice as white and fine as snow poured through a vent, and the girl scooped it up and expertly without touching it by hand transferred it into paper cups, and then she squirted thick dark purple fluid onto the ice, and it was suddenly magically like a sunset transformed into a violet delight, and she smiled and passed the cups over the counter.

"Keep your fingers out of it," he said to Amanda.

They rested on a bench, and tilted the cups to their lips, and the sweet ice gushed into their mouths.

"Isn't it good?" Amanda said. "It gets sweeter as it goes down."

"Yes," he said, and thought how few things were sweeter as they got down, and he squeezed his cup and the fluid was bright and clean in his mouth.

"This is the nicest park there is," he said again.

"Yes," she said, and drained at her snowball with a sucking bubbling sound. She thrust her thin fingers into the cup to extract the last sweet dregs. Roughly he snatched out her hand and slapped her hard, and cried by God he had told her to keep her fingers out of it and did she want to get sick all over again. She flushed and he felt as if he had kicked her, and he pulled her close to him and kissed her and stroked her hair; her thinness was like a blow.

"I am so sorry, honey," he said, "but I have been worried about you. You must not mind when I act like this. It is only because I love you so much, and I do not want you to get sick again, ever."

She slowly turned her head towards him, and tried to smile, and he took out his monogrammed handkerchief and brushed at the corners of her eyes.

"Now how do you feel?" he asked, and when she said she felt fine he wanted to shout and dance and sing. He held her hand as they walked away from the refreshment booth while the starched girl squinted at him, and they walked slowly over the hard-packed grayish dirt. There was very little dust, he thought with satisfaction; he had never known a place like Funland to be so clean and orderly.

Amanda suddenly broke from his grasp.

"Oh," she cried, and ran towards a large brightly lighted cage near an open place where baby tanks puffed and grunted.

"Look," she called; "oh Daddy, look."

In the bright clean cage, littered with scooter, tricycle, rubber balls, trapeze, and a punching bag, a young chimpanzee sat in a baby's high chair, munching at a banana.

"Rollo," the sign atop the cage read, "Just Recently Arrived from the Belgian Congo Region of West Africa. A two-year-old chimpanzee . . . just four and a half months in captivity."

Daintily Rollo nibbled, breaking off small chunks with his long-haired, tynailed hands and placing the fruit meticulously in a mouth like the furnace door of the small train that was again circling the far dark end of the grounds, emerging from its tunnel with a triumphant toot and jangle. The chimpanzee finished his treat, placed the parachute of limp skin on the tray of his chair, and wiped his hands on scarlet trousers. Amanda screamed with delight and Rollo swung with dedicated grace to land noiselessly on the floor with flat tennis-shoe clad feet. With strong, pink-palmed, beautiful hands he grasped the bars of his cage, and gazed at the child with stonedark eyes, like small pools of night in his clean tan face, and he opened his great lips, and smiled.

Amanda clapped her hands and Rollo whirled and leaped to the rope which spanned the cage; hand over hand, he swung from one end of the cage to the other. By ones and twos people approached, laughing and chatting, and Rollo again dropped like a sunbeam to the floor. His trainer, a gentle, patient man with a limp and a dangling cigarette and a face too much like Rollo's to be a coincidence, reached for the roller skates hanging on the wall and attached them to the chimpanzee's hightopped tennis shoes. He held his hand, and Rollo glided noiselessly on his well-oiled skates, skating surely and competently and enjoying himself.

When the man climbed clumsily over the low iron railing in front of the cage, and tossed a few pieces of popcorn between the bars, Rollo stumbled and almost fell. The attendant reached quickly for the chimpanzee's hand, and frowned at the intruder. Amanda turned upon the popcorn thrower, a fat man whose hairy black nipples stared blankly beneath a bilge-colored nylon sport shirt.

"You've frightened him," she said in sudden fury. "You've frightened him."

In anger the fat man threw another handful of popcorn between the bars, and the trainer sadly shook his head. Still holding Rollo by the hand, he led him to the high chair and swung him up to the seat, and removed the skates. Then he pulled a switch, and all the light in the cage went out. Rollo sat alone, his yellow shirt and scarlet trousers and sneakered feet now gray in the darkness.

"Christ," the fat man said. "Who does that guy think he is, anyways? Christ, it's only a monkey."

He grabbed his fat child, a child with a face like a rutabaga, and disappeared.

"What a horrid, nasty man," Amanda said. "Can't we see Rollo again? Won't he come out again?"

"Maybe later," the father said; "maybe later."

"Besides," she said, "he's not a monkey. He's a chimpanzee, an anth . . . anthropoid, isn't he, Daddy?"

"That's right," he said. "He's not a monkey, he's an anthropoid, and maybe he'll come out later anyhow."

Amanda walked away, but soon stopped at the foot of the Ferris wheel. She gazed upwards at its swift smoothness, sparkling, a small circle of lights winking near the hub, and a larger circle glowing in the middle, and the whole great machine alive with an outline of red and blue and green neon tubing, flashing as the twelve carriages, one red then one black then another red and another black, swam miraculously into the cool dry blackness of the starless night, some carriages swinging empty, in another two teen-aged girls singing "Oklahoma," in others a father and a white-faced, pop-eyed infant, a young man and a girl their arms locked around each other as they soared from the light to the darkness, and two boys clowning and roaring. The operator squeezed the grip-handle of the lever and pushed it and the engine slowed down, and the wheel came to a silent stop. There was a sudden, almost reverent hush, and a squeal of terrified delight from the occupants of the carriage at the very top of the wheel swinging coldly in the dark, and then the voices of the girls singing "Oklahoma" clear and far away and miles and miles away in the thin cold air at the top of the wheel, and miles and miles away from the hard gray ground and the prancing merry-go-round horses with their flaring orange nostrils and white champing cannibal teeth and the refreshment stand with the efficient girl in her starched white uniform. The operator

stepped on a pedal, and a landing platform slid close to the carriage; the attendant lifted the bar and the occupants stepped gingerly down, the father glad to deposit the child into the mother's arms.

"Must we ride this now, Amanda?" the father asked.

"Oh yes," she said and edged her way towards the entrance. "Can I," she said, and squeezed his hand, and her dark eyes glistened, "oh can I go all alone like you promised when I was sick?"

"Let me go with you," he said.

"Don't be a meanie," she said. "Please, Daddy, remember you promised."

"All right," he said. "All right, but you must be very, very careful. You must promise to sit right in the middle of the seat, and you must keep your hands tight on the bar all the time. Do you promise?"

"Brownie's honor," she said and held up her hand, palm outwards and three fingers aloft in a half salute. She hugged him, and he lowered his head and she brushed his cheek with a quick kiss.

The wheel stopped again, and he gave her her money and said loudly give it to the man. He looked at the operator like a fellow-conspirator suddenly catching in a great crowd the long-anticipated signal, and again he said loudly if you do not sit right in the middle and hold the bar tightly I shall ask the attendant to stop the wheel.

"Oh Daddy," she said. The operator smiled when she gave him the money, and placed her firmly in the very middle of the carriage, clicking the protective bar into place with special emphasis as though to say I understand the way you feel; do not worry.

Amanda sat very straight in her seat and gripped the iron bar. The operator pushed the lever slowly forward, and the wheel rose noiselessly. Amanda smiled from her perch as the operator again pulled back the lever, and the wheel stopped and an aged man and wife emerged from their carriage as though from the floor of the ocean.

Again the operator pushed the lever, and the wheel began to turn. The father ran back a few feet; he could see Amanda tiny, disappearing into the darkness. He hoped the operator would not halt the wheel with Amanda's carriage at the summit. His scrotum tightened as he thought of her, up there alone in the dark. He saw the crouching mountains, a ragged darkness palpable against the

blueblack of the night, and the city swimming in a blob of red and blue and green and orange and white lights, while to the west naked and blue the desert scattered its bones to the ends of the vanished watershed. Then Amanda in a black carriage outlined with green neon swept past him, and smiled and was gone. He started to wave, but checked his arm, not wanting her to take her hands from the iron bar to reply. Then, in what seemed an instant, she came by him again, and he winked at her reassuringly before her carriage swam upwards into the darkness. He looked at the sturdy iron wheel and the concrete foundation. This was no fly-by-night carnival, but a permanent operation, thank God, he thought; thousands of people rode the safe, sturdy wheel each season. Again Amanda was smiling when her carriage flashed by, and he lighted a cigarette and smiled conspiratorially at the operator in his white coveralls, a sensible man with one foot resting nonchalantly near the flywheel of the generator.

He counted the carriages as they glided before his line of vision, one red then one black, then another red and another black. He awaited the passage of Amanda's carriage which he must have missed while he was lighting his cigarette. Suddenly, painfully, a hard ball of fear exploded in his throat.

This is absurd, he thought. He forced himself to stand still and look with studied calm at the swiftly turning wheel. What had been the color of the tubing which outlined Amanda's carriage. Green? No, red. Surely not red on a red, or was it a black, carriage?

The wheel made several more swift, noiseless circuits, and still he could not see the pale smiling face of Amanda. His hands shook, and sweat drenched his back and upper legs. With an effort as conscious and deliberate as holding his breath under water he controlled himself. This is ridiculous, he thought. This is an optical illusion. He said to himself, I will count each carriage very carefully as it goes past, and then I will see her, and soon the wheel will stop, and she will get out, and we will have a very good laugh about this.

He counted the carriages as they glided swiftly before his eyes. First a red with an old man, then two empties, then a black with two grinning nobheaded boys, then a red with the girls now singing "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," then an empty, then another red, and his heart suddenly soared like a geyser only to sink hideously; it was not Amanda but a much older child. Then a man

and a child and two more empties, then a red with a mother and a baby followed by a black with a soldier and a girl, then another red with an old man, the same hideous old man he'd begun counting with, and with a cry like an animal's he leaped over the low steel railing and clutched at the attendant's arm.

"Stop it," he said; "for God's sake, stop the wheel."

The attendant frowned, then smiled, and squeezed the handle of the lever, and pulled back the lever, and an empty black carriage swung like a dry leaf above his head.

"My daughter," he gasped, "the little one with the black hair," but two snottynosed boys pushed their way between him and the operator, poking out their hands with the money in them, and climbed into the carriage snickering and guffawing and wolfing popcorn.

"For the love of God," he cried, and the popcorn-eaters looked at him as though he were an ape in a straw hat. "For the love of God, where is my daughter? I think it is time you let the little girl off. The one with the black hair. She has on a blue suit and a cap. You remember."

"Yes sir," the attendant said, and smiled. Relief flowed through him; he slapped the operator heartily on the back.

"I lost sight of her for a moment," he said. "In the dark. My eyes. It gave me a turn, for a moment."

The operator nodded, and pushed the lever, and the next carriage empty, swung past, and he stopped the wheel at the next to let the mother and baby out. The baby had wet its diaper and a dark stain overspread the mother's breast like a wound. Then there was the carriage with the soldier and the girl, and they leaned out and yelled *whatsthematterwhyduhyuhkeepstoppinthewheel?* Then another empty and one in red with the old man, and he lost count. Amanda, he screamed; his voice was like a ship sinking darkly.

"Amanda," he screamed again, and the attendant stopped the wheel and came towards him and he was no longer smiling. People converged upon him, he was the center of a whirling funnel of blank paper faces.

"Good God, good God," he cried. "Where are you, baby?"

The children in the toy train again making its sliding halt before the depot leaned over the edges of the coaches and looked questioningly at the Ferris wheel glowing in the distance. Amanda, the

father cried, and the sound tore and twisted its way above the clanking of the scenic railway and the put-put-put of the miniature tractors and the wheezing of the merry-go-round. Noiselessly the curtains of the clean cage parted, and the lights flowed on, and Rollo climbed quietly down from his high chair. He listened intently to the wild broken cries in the night. Then he pressed his tan face against the bars and gazed with comprehending eyes at the dark figure with uplifted head outlined like a corpse against the spokes of the great wheel blazing in the night.

ENTROPY

BY THOMAS PYNCHON

Boris has just given me a summary of his views. He is a weather prophet. The weather will continue bad, he says. There will be more calamities, more death, more despair. Not the slightest indication of a change anywhere. . . . We must get into step, a lockstep toward the prison of death. There is no escape. The weather will not change.

Tropic of Cancer

DOWNSTAIRS, Meatball Mulligan's lease-breaking party was moving into its 40th hour. On the kitchen floor, amid a litter of empty champagne fifths, were Sandor Rojas and three friends, playing spit in the ocean and staying awake on Heidseck and benzedrine pills. In the living room Duke, Vincent, Krinkles and Paco sat crouched over a fifteen-inch speaker which had been bolted into the top of a wastepaper basket, listening to 27 watts' worth of *The Heroes' Gate at Kiev*. They all wore horn-rimmed sunglasses and rapt expressions, and smoked funny-looking cigarettes which contained not, as you might expect, tobacco, but an adulterated form of *cannibis sativa*. This group was the Duke di Angelis quartet. They recorded for a local label called Tambú and had to their credit one 10" LP entitled *Songs of Outer Space*. From time to time one of them would flick the ashes from his cigarette into the speaker cone to watch them dance around. Meatball himself was sleeping over by the window, holding an empty magnum to his chest as if it were a teddy bear. Several government girls, who

worked for people like the State Department and NSA, had passed out on couches, chairs and in one case the bathroom sink.

This was in early February of '57 and back then there were a lot of American expatriates around Washington, D.C., who would talk, every time they met you, about how someday they were going to go over to Europe for real but right now it seemed they were working for the government. Everyone saw a fine irony in this. They would stage, for instance, polyglot parties where the newcomer was sort of ignored if he couldn't carry on simultaneous conversations in three or four languages. They would haunt Armenian delicatessens for weeks at a stretch and invite you over for bulghour and lamb in tiny kitchens whose walls were covered with bullfight posters. They would have affairs with sultry girls from Andalucía or the Midi who studied economics at Georgetown. Their Dôme was a collegiate Rathskeller out on Wisconsin Avenue called the Old Heidelberg and they had to settle for cherry blossoms instead of lime trees when spring came, but in its lethargic way their life provided, as they said, kicks.

At the moment, Meatball's party seemed to be gathering its second wind. Outside there was rain. Rain splatted against the tar paper on the roof and was fractured into a fine spray off the noses, eyebrows and lips of wooden gargoyles under the eaves, and ran like drool down the windowpanes. The day before, it had snowed and the day before that there had been winds of gale force and before that the sun had made the city glitter bright as April, though the calendar read early February. It is a curious season in Washington, this false spring. Somewhere in it are Lincoln's Birthday and the Chinese New Year, and a forlornness in the streets because cherry blossoms are weeks away still and, as Sarah Vaughan has put it, spring will be a little late this year. Generally crowds like the one which would gather in the Old Heidelberg on weekday afternoons to drink Würtzburger and to sing "Lili Marlene" (not to mention "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi") are inevitably and incorrigibly Romantic. And as every good Romantic knows, the soul (*spiritus*, *ruach*, *pneuma*) is nothing, substantially, but air; it is only natural that warpings in the atmosphere should be recapitulated in those who breathe it. So that over and above the public components — holidays, tourist attractions — there are private meanderings, linked to the climate as if this spell were a *stretto* passage in

the year's fugue: haphazard weather, aimless loves, unpredicted commitments: months one can easily spend *in* fugue, because oddly enough, later on, winds, rains, passions of February and March are never remembered in that city, it is as if they had never been.

The last bass notes of *The Heroes' Gate* boomed up through the floor and woke Callisto from an uneasy sleep. The first thing he became aware of was a small bird he had been holding gently between his hands, against his body. He turned his head sidewise on the pillow to smile down at it, at its blue hunched-down head and sick, lidded eyes, wondering how many more nights he would have to give it warmth before it was well again. He had been holding the bird like that for three days: it was the only way he knew to restore its health. Next to him the girl stirred and whimpered, her arm thrown across her face. Mingled with the sounds of the rain came the first tentative, querulous morning voices of the other birds, hidden in philodendrons and small fan palms: patches of scarlet, yellow and blue laced through this Rousseau-like fantasy, this hothouse jungle it had taken him seven years to weave together. Hermetically sealed, it was a tiny enclave of regularity in the city's chaos, alien to the vagaries of the weather, of national politics, of any civil disorder. Through trial-and-error Callisto had perfected its ecological balance, with the help of the girl its artistic harmony, so that the swayings of its plant life, the stirrings of its birds and human inhabitants were all as integral as the rhythms of a perfectly executed mobile. He and the girl could no longer, of course, be omitted from that sanctuary; they had become necessary to its unity. What they needed from outside was delivered. They did not go out.

"Is he all right," she whispered. She lay like a tawny question mark facing him, her eyes suddenly huge and dark and blinking slowly. Callisto ran a finger beneath the feathers at the base of the bird's neck; caressed it gently. "He's going to be well, I think. See: he hears his friends beginning to wake up." The girl had heard the rain and the birds even before she was fully awake. Her name was Aubade: she was part French and part Annamese, and she lived on her own curious and lonely planet, where the clouds and the odor of poincianas, the bitterness of wine and the accidental fingers at the small of her back or feathery against her breasts came to her reduced inevitably to the terms of sound: of music which emerged at intervals from a howling darkness of discordancy. "Aubade,"

he said, "go see." Obedient, she arose; padded to the window, pulled aside the drapes and after a moment said: "It is 37. Still 37." Callisto frowned. "Since Tuesday, then," he said. "No change." Henry Adams, three generations before his own, had stared aghast at Power; Callisto found himself now in much the same state over Thermodynamics, the inner life of that power, realizing like his predecessor that the Virgin and the dynamo stand as much for love as for power; that the two are indeed identical; and that love therefore not only makes the world go 'round but also makes the boccie ball spin, the nebula precess. It was this latter or sidereal element which disturbed him. The cosmologists had predicted an eventual heat-death for the universe (something like Limbo: form and motion abolished, heat-energy identical at every point in it); the meteorologists, day-to-day, staved it off by contradicting with a reassuring array of varied temperatures.

But for three days now, despite the changeful weather, the mercury had stayed at 37 degrees Fahrenheit. Leery at omens of apocalypse, Callisto shifted beneath the covers. His fingers pressed the bird more firmly, as if needing some pulsing or suffering assurance of an early break in the temperature.

It was that last cymbal crash that did it. Meatball was hurled wincing into consciousness as the synchronized wagging of heads over the wastebasket stopped. The final hiss remained for an instant in the room, then melted into the whisper of rain outside. "Aarrgghh," announced Meatball in the silence, looking at the empty magnum. Krinkles, in slow motion, turned, smiled and held out a cigarette. "Tea time, man," he said. "No, no," said Meatball. "How many times I got to tell you guys. Not at my place. You ought to know, Washington is lousy with Feds." Krinkles looked wistful. "Jeez, Meatball," he said, "you don't want to do nothing no more." "Hair of dog," said Meatball. "Only hope. Any juice left?" He began to crawl toward the kitchen. "No champagne, I don't think," Duke said. "Case of tequila behind the ice-box." They put on an Earl Bostic side. Meatball paused at the kitchen door, glowering at Sandor Rojas. "Lemons," he said after some thought. He crawled to the refrigerator and got out three lemons and some cubes, found the tequila and set about restoring order to his nervous system. He drew blood once cutting the lemons and had to use two hands squeezing them and his foot to crack

the ice tray but after about ten minutes he found himself, through some miracle, beaming down into a monster tequila sour. "That looks yummy," Sandor Rojas said. "How about you make me one." Meatball blinked at him. "*Kitchi lofass a shegitbe*," he replied automatically, and wandered away into the bathroom. "I say," he called out a moment later to no one in particular. "I say, there seems to be a girl or something sleeping in the sink." He took her by the shoulders and shook. "Wha," she said. "You don't look too comfortable," Meatball said. "Well," she agreed. She stumbled to the shower, turned on the cold water and sat down crosslegged in the spray. "That's better," she smiled.

"Meatball," Sandor Rojas yelled from the kitchen. "Somebody is trying to come in the window. A burglar, I think. A second-story man." "What are you worrying about," Meatball said. "We're on the third floor." He loped back into the kitchen. A shaggy woebegone figure stood out on the fire escape, raking his fingernails down the windowpane. Meatball opened the window. "Saul," he said.

"Sort of wet out," Saul said. He climbed in, dripping. "You heard, I guess."

"Miriam left you," Meatball said, "or something, is all I heard."

There was a sudden flurry of knocking at the front door. "Do come in," Sandor Rojas called. The door opened and there were three coeds from George Washington, all of whom were majoring in philosophy. They were each holding a gallon of Chianti. Sandor leaped up and dashed into the living room. "We heard there was a party," one blonde said. "Young blood," Sandor shouted. He was an ex-Hungarian freedom fighter who had easily the worst chronic case of what certain critics of the middle class have called Don Giovannism in the District of Columbia. *Purche porti la gonnella, voi sapete quel che fa*. Like Pavlov's dog: a contralto voice or a whiff of Arpège and Sandor would begin to salivate. Meatball regarded the trio blearily as they filed into the kitchen; he shrugged. "Put the wine in the icebox," he said, "and good morning."

Aubade's neck made a golden bow as she bent over the sheets of foolscap, scribbling away in the green murk of the room. "As a young man at Princeton," Callisto was dictating, nestling the bird against the gray hairs of his chest, "Callisto had learned a mne-

monic device for remembering the Laws of Thermodynamics: you can't win, things are going to get worse before they get better, who says they're going to get better. At the age of 54, confronted with Gibbs' notion of the universe, he suddenly realized that undergraduate cant had been oracle, after all. That spindly maze of equations became, for him, a vision of ultimate, cosmic heat-death. He had known all along, of course, that nothing but a theoretical engine or system ever runs at 100 per cent efficiency; and about the theorem of Clausius, which states that the entropy of an isolated system always continually increases. It was not, however, until Gibbs and Boltzmann brought to this principle the methods of statistical mechanics that the horrible significance of it all dawned on him: only then did he realize that the isolated system — galaxy, engine, human being, culture, whatever — must evolve spontaneously toward the Condition of the More Probable. He was forced, therefore, in the sad dying fall of middle age, to a radical reevaluation of everything he had learned up to then; all the cities and seasons and casual passions of his days had now to be looked at in a new and elusive light. He did not know if he was equal to the task. He was aware of the dangers of the reductive fallacy and, he hoped, strong enough not to drift into the graceful decadence of an enervated fatalism. His had always been a vigorous, Italian sort of pessimism: like Machiavelli, he allowed the forces of *virtú* and *fortuna* to be about 50/50; but the equations now introduced a random factor which pushed the odds to some unutterable and indeterminate ratio which he found himself afraid to calculate." Around him loomed vague hothouse shapes; the pitifully small heart fluttered against his own. Counterpointed against his words the girl heard the chatter of birds and fitful car honkings scattered along the wet morning and Earl Bostic's alto rising in occasional wild peaks through the floor. The architectonic purity of her world was constantly threatened by such hints of anarchy: gaps and excrescences and skew lines, and a shifting or tilting of planes to which she had continually to readjust lest the whole structure shiver into disarray of discrete and meaningless signals. Callisto had described the process once as a kind of "feedback": she crawled into dreams each night with a sense of exhaustion, and a desperate resolve never to relax that vigilance. Even in the brief periods when Cal-

listo made love to her, soaring above the bowing of taut nerves in haphazard double-stops would be the one singing string of her determination.

"Nevertheless," continued Callisto, "he found in entropy or the measure of disorganization for a closed system an adequate metaphor to apply to certain phenomena in his own world. He saw, for example, the younger generation responding to Madison Avenue with the same spleen his own had once reserved for Wall Street, and in American 'consumerism' discovered a similar tendency from the least to the most probable, from differentiation to sameness, from ordered individuality to a kind of chaos. He found himself, in short, restating Gibbs' prediction in social terms, and envisioned a heat-death for his culture in which ideas, like heat-energy, would no longer be transferred, since each point in it would ultimately have the same quantity of energy; and intellectual motion would, accordingly, cease." He glanced up suddenly. "Check it now," he said. Again she rose and peered out at the thermometer. "Thirty-seven," she said. "The rain has stopped." He bent his head quickly and held his lips against a quivering wing. "Then it will change soon," he said, trying to keep his voice firm.

Sitting on the stove Saul was like any big rag doll that a kid has been taking out some incomprehensible rage on. "What happened," Meatball said. "If you feel like talking, I mean."

"Of course I feel like talking," Saul said. "One thing I did, I slugged her."

"Discipline must be maintained."

"Ha, ha. I wish you'd been there. Oh Meatball, it was a lovely fight. She ended up throwing a *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics* at me, only it missed and went through the window, and when the glass broke I reckon something in her broke too. She stormed out of the house crying, out in the rain. No raincoat or anything."

"She'll be back."

"No."

"Well." Soon Meatball said: "It was something earth-shattering, no doubt. Like who is better, Sal Mineo or Ricky Nelson."

"What it was about," Saul said, "was communication theory. Which of course makes it very hilarious."

"I don't know anything about communication theory."

"Neither does my wife. Come right down to it, who does? That's the joke."

When Meatball saw the kind of smile Saul had on his face he said: "Maybe you would like tequila or something."

"No. I mean, I'm sorry. It's a field you can go off the deep end in, is all. You get where you're watching all the time for security cops: behind bushes, around corners. MUFFET is top secret."

"Wha."

"Multi-unit factorial field electronic tabulator."

"You were fighting about that."

"Miriam has been reading science-fiction again. That and *Scientific American*. It seems she is, as we say, bugged at this idea of computers acting like people. I made the mistake of saying you can just as well turn that around, and talk about human behavior like a program fed into an IBM machine."

"Why not," Meatball said.

"Indeed, why not. In fact it is sort of crucial to communication, not to mention information theory. Only when I said that she hit the roof. Up went the balloon. And I can't figure out *why*. If anybody should know why, I should. I refuse to believe the government is wasting taxpayers' money on me, when it has so many bigger and better things to waste it on."

Meatball made a moue. "Maybe she thought you were acting like a cold, dehumanized amoral scientist type."

"My god," Saul flung up an arm. "Dehumanized. How much more human can I get? I worry, Meatball, I do. There are Europeans wandering around North Africa these days with their tongues torn out of their heads because those tongues have spoken the wrong words. Only the Europeans thought they were the right words."

"Language barrier," Meatball suggested.

Saul jumped down off the stove. "That," he said, angry, "is a good candidate for sick joke of the year. No, ace, it is *not* a barrier. If it is anything it's a kind of leakage. Tell a girl: 'I love you.' No trouble with two-thirds of that, it's a closed circuit. Just you and she. But that nasty four-letter word in the middle, *that's* the one you have to look out for. Ambiguity. Redundance. Irrelevance, even. Leakage. All this is noise. Noise screws up your signal, makes for disorganization in the circuit."

Meatball shuffled around. "Well, now, Saul," he muttered, "you're sort of, I don't know, expecting a lot from people. I mean, you know. What it is is, most of the things we say, I guess, are mostly noise."

"Ha! Half of what you just said, for example."

"Well, you do it too."

"I know." Saul smiled grimly. "It's a bitch, ain't it."

"I bet that's what keeps divorce lawyers in business. Whoops."

"Oh I'm not sensitive. Besides," frowning, "you're right. You find I think that most 'successful' marriages — Miriam and me, up to last night — are sort of founded on compromises. You never run at top efficiency, usually all you have is a minimum basis for a workable thing. I believe the phrase is Togetherness."

"Aarrgghh."

"Exactly. You find that one a bit noisy, don't you. But the noise content is different for each of us because you're a bachelor and I'm not. Or wasn't. The hell with it."

"Well sure," Meatball said, trying to be helpful, "you were using different words. By 'human being' you meant something that you can look at like it was a computer. It helps you think better on the job or something. But Miriam meant something entirely —"

"The hell with it."

Meatball fell silent. "I'll take that drink," Saul said after a while.

The card game had been abandoned and Sandor's friends were slowly getting wasted on tequila. On the living room couch, one of the coeds and Krinkles were engaged in amorous conversation. "No," Krinkles was saying, "no, I can't put Dave *down*. In fact I give Dave a lot of credit, man. Especially considering his accident and all." The girl's smile faded. "How terrible," she said. "What accident?" "Hadn't you heard?" Krinkles said. "When Dave was in the army, just a private E-2, they sent him down to Oak Ridge on special duty. Something to do with the Manhattan Project. He was handling hot stuff one day and got an overdose of radiation. So now he's got to wear lead gloves all the time." She shook her head sympathetically. "What an awful break for a piano-player."

Meatball had abandoned Saul to a bottle of tequila and was about to go to sleep in a closet when the front door flew open and

the place was invaded by five enlisted personnel of the U.S. Navy, all in varying stages of abomination. "This is the place," shouted a fat, pimply seaman apprentice who had lost his white hat. "This here is the hoorhouse that chief was telling us about." A stringy-looking 3rd class boatswain's mate pushed him aside and cased the living room. "You're right, Slab," he said. "But it don't look like much, even for Stateside. I seen better tail in Naples, Italy." "How much, hey," boomed a large seaman with adenoids, who was holding a Mason jar full of white lightning. "Oh, my god," said Meatball.

Outside the temperature remained constant at 37 degrees Fahrenheit. In the hothouse Aubade stood absently caressing the branches of a young mimosa, hearing a motif of sap-rising, the rough and unresolved anticipatory theme of those fragile pink blossoms which, it is said, insure fertility. That music rose in a tangled tracery: arabesques of order competing fugally with the improvised discords of the party downstairs, which peaked sometimes in cusps and ogees of noise. That precious signal-to-noise ratio, whose delicate balance required every calorie of her strength, seesawed inside the small tenuous skull as she watched Callisto, sheltering the bird. Callisto was trying to confront any idea of the heat-death now, as he nuzzled the feathery lump in his hands. He sought correspondences. Sade, of course. And Temple Drake, gaunt and hopeless in her little park in Paris, at the end of *Sanctuary*. Final equilibrium. *Nightwood*. And the tango. Any tango, but more than any perhaps the sad sick dance in Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat*. He thought back: what had tango music been for them after the war, what meanings had he missed in all the stately coupled automatons in the *cafés-dansants*, or in the metronomes which had ticked behind the eyes of his own partners? Not even the clean constant winds of Switzerland could cure the *grippe espagnole*: Stravinsky had had it, they all had had it. And how many musicians were left after Passchendaele, after the Marne? It came down in this case to seven: violin, double-bass. Clarinet, bassoon. Cornet, trombone. Tympani. Almost as if any tiny troupe of saltimbanques had set about conveying the same information as a full pit-orchestra. There was hardly a full complement left in Europe. Yet with violin and tympani Stravinsky had managed to communicate in that tango the same exhaustion, the same airlessness one saw in the slicked-down

youths who were trying to imitate Vernon Castle, and in their mistresses, who simply did not care. *Ma maitresse*. Celeste. Returning to Nice after the second war he had found that café replaced by a perfume shop which catered to American tourists. And no secret vestige of her in the cobblestones or in the old pension next door; no perfume to match her breath heavy with the sweet Spanish wine she always drank. And so instead he had purchased a Henry Miller novel and left for Paris, and read the book on the train so that when he arrived he had been given at least a little forewarning. And saw that Celeste and the others and even Temple Drake were not all that had changed. "Aubade," he said, "my head aches." The sound of his voice generated in the girl an answering scrap of melody. Her movement toward the kitchen, the towel, the cold water, and his eyes following her formed a weird and intricate canon; as she placed the compress on his forehead his sigh of gratitude seemed to signal a new subject, another series of modulations.

"No," Meatball was still saying, "no, I'm afraid not. This is not a house of ill repute. I'm sorry, really I am." Slab was adamant. "But the chief said," he kept repeating. The seaman offered to swap the moonshine for a good piece. Meatball looked around frantically, as if seeking assistance. In the middle of the room, the Duke di Angelis quartet were engaged in a historic moment. Vincent was seated and the others standing: they were going through the emotions of a group having a session, only without instruments. "I say," Meatball said. Duke moved his head a few times, smiled faintly, lit a cigarette, and eventually caught sight of Meatball. "Quiet, man," he whispered. Vincent began to fling his arms around, his fists clenched; then, abruptly, was still, then repeated the performance. This went on for a few minutes while Meatball sipped his drink moodily. The navy had withdrawn to the kitchen. Finally at some invisible signal the group stopped tapping their feet and Duke grinned and said, "At least we ended together."

Meatball glared at him. "I say," he said. "I have this new conception, man," Duke said. "You remember your namesake. You remember Gerry."

"No," said Meatball. "I'll remember April, if that's any help."

"As a matter of fact," Duke said, "it was Love for Sale. Which

shows how much you know. The point is, it was Mulligan, Chet Baker and that crew, way back then, out yonder. You dig?"

"Baritone sax," Meatball said. "Something about a baritone sax."

"But no piano, man. No guitar. Or accordion. You know what that means."

"Not exactly," Meatball said.

"Well first let me just say, that I am no Mingus, no John Lewis. Theory was never my strong point. I mean things like reading were always difficult for me and all —"

"I know," Meatball said drily. "You got your card taken away because you changed key on Happy Birthday at a Kiwanis Club picnic."

"Rotarian. But it occurred to me, in one of these flashes of insight, that if that first quartet of Mulligan's had no piano, it could only mean one thing."

"No chords," said Paco, the baby-faced bass.

"What he is trying to say," Duke said, "is no root chords. Nothing to listen to while you blow a horizontal line. What one does in such a case is, one *thinks* the roots."

A horrified awareness was dawning on Meatball. "And the next logical extension," he said.

"Is to think everything," Duke announced with simple dignity. "Roots, line, everything."

Meatball looked at Duke, awed. "But," he said.

"Well," Duke said modestly, "there are a few bugs to work out."

"But," Meatball said.

"Just listen," Duke said. "You'll catch on." And off they went again into orbit, presumably somewhere around the asteroid belt. After a while Krinkles made an embouchure and started moving his fingers and Duke clapped his hand to his forehead. "Oaf!" he roared. "The new head we're using, you remember, I wrote last night?" "Sure," Krinkles said, "the new head. I come in on the bridge. All your heads I come in then." "Right," Duke said. "So why —" "Wha," said Krinkles, "16 bars, I wait, I come in —" "16?" Duke said. "No. No, Krinkles. Eight you waited. You want me to sing it? A cigarette that bears a lipstick's traces, an airline ticket to romantic places." Krinkles scratched his head. "These

Foolish Things, you mean." "Yes," Duke said, "yes, Krinkles. Bravo." "Not I'll Remember April," Krinkles said. "*Minghe morte*," said Duke. "I *figured* we were playing it a little slow," Krinkles said. Meatball chuckled. "Back to the old drawing board," he said. "No, man," Duke said, "back to the airless void." And they took off again, only it seemed Paco was playing in G sharp while the rest were in E flat, so they had to start all over.

In the kitchen two of the girls from George Washington and the sailors were singing Let's All Go Down and Piss on the Forrestal. There was a two-handed, bilingual *mura* game on over by the ice-box. Saul had filled several paper bags with water and was sitting on the fire escape, dropping them on passersby in the street. A fat government girl in a Bennington sweatshirt, recently engaged to an ensign attached to the Forrestal, came charging into the kitchen, head lowered, and butted Slab in the stomach. Figuring this was as good an excuse for a fight as any, Slab's buddies piled in. The *mura* players were nose-to-nose, screaming *trois*, *sette* at the tops of their lungs. From the shower the girl Meatball had taken out of the sink announced that she was drowning. She had apparently sat on the drain and the water was now up to her neck. The noise in Meatball's apartment had reached a sustained, ungodly crescendo.

Meatball stood and watched, scratching his stomach lazily. The way he figured, there were only about two ways he could cope: (a) lock himself in the closet and maybe eventually they would all go away, or (b) try to calm everybody down, one by one. (a) was certainly the more attractive alternative. But then he started thinking about that closet. It was dark and stuffy and he would be alone. He did not feature being alone. And then this crew off the good ship Lollipop or whatever it was might take it upon themselves to kick down the closet door, for a lark. And if that happened he would be, at the very least, embarrassed. The other way was more a pain in the neck, but probably better in the long run.

So he decided to try and keep his lease-breaking party from deteriorating into total chaos: he gave wine to the sailors and separated the *mura* players; he introduced the fat government girl to Sandor Rojas, who would keep her out of trouble; he helped the girl in the shower to dry off and get into bed; he had another talk with Saul; he called a repairman for the refrigerator, which some-

one had discovered was on the blink. This is what he did until nightfall, when most of the revellers had passed out and the party trembled on the threshold of its third day.

Upstairs Callisto, helpless in the past, did not feel the faint rhythm inside the bird begin to slacken and fail. Aubade was by the window, wandering the ashes of her own lovely world; the temperature held steady, the sky had become a uniform darkening gray. Then something from downstairs—a girl's scream, an over-turned chair, a glass dropped on the floor, he would never know what exactly—pierced that private time-warp and he became aware of the faltering, the constriction of muscles, the tiny tossings of the bird's head; and his own pulse began to pound more fiercely, as if trying to compensate. "Aubade," he called weakly, "he's dying." The girl, flowing and rapt, crossed the hothouse to gaze down at Callisto's hands. The two remained like that, poised, for one minute, and two, while the heartbeat ticked a graceful diminuendo down at last into stillness. Callisto raised his head slowly. "I held him," he protested, impotent with the wonder of it, "to give him the warmth of my body. Almost as if I were communicating life to him, or a sense of life. What has happened? Has the transfer of heat ceased to work? Is there no more . . ." He did not finish.

"I was just at the window," she said. He sank back, terrified. She stood a moment more, irresolute; she had sensed his obsession long ago, realized somehow that that constant 37 was now decisive. Suddenly then, as if seeing the single and unavoidable conclusion to all this she moved swiftly to the window before Callisto could speak; tore away the drapes and smashed out the glass with two exquisite hands which came away bleeding and glistening with splinters; and turned to face the man on the bed and wait with him until the moment of equilibrium was reached, when 37 degrees Fahrenheit should prevail both outside and inside, and forever, and the hovering, curious dominant of their separate lives should resolve into a tonic of darkness and the final absence of all motion.

THE COLLEAGUES OF MR. CHIPS

BY SAMUEL SANDMEL

FOR THE TENTH, or hundredth time, Jim Drummond glanced through the thirty pages of the article he had written.

The envelope in which to send it off to the editor of the *Journal of Philology and Linguistics* was addressed and stamped, and all that Jim needed to do was to insert the manuscript, seal the envelope, and then mail it. It was certainly the prudent thing to do. Professor Hotchkiss, the department chairman, had made that clear. But something inside him was deterring Jim.

He tried vaguely to trace the long way back to the beginning. He recalled clearly the interview in Dean Simpson's office, where Dr. Hotchkiss had taken him, after Hotchkiss and he had talked conclusively about Jim's coming in September to Wilson University on a two-year appointment as an instructor in English.

Dean Simpson was a grey-haired man, quick of speech, and exuberant in manner. He leaned back in his chair and said, "I am certainly delighted that you'll be with us, Dr. Drummond." Jim wasn't really a doctor as yet; that would not come for another six weeks, when Travers University would have its commencement exercise.

Dr. Hotchkiss spoke in his usual quiet way. "I've told him that we are offering him a wonderful opportunity here." He turned to Simpson. "Dr. Drummond — your first name is Jim, isn't it? — is a specialist in the early history of the English language."

"This is a wonderful place to begin an academic career," said Simpson. "And the future is very bright. Provided that a man pro-

duces. There is nothing more important to a university than a faculty dedicated to productive scholarship." He leaned forward and smiled. "We have no room at Wilson for a Mr. Chips." Dr. Hotchkiss nodded his head. "Young man," Simpson went on, "we want you to write and to publish." Again Hotchkiss nodded his head.

The dean's secretary came in to say that someone was waiting. Dean Simpson stood up, and extended his hand. Jim took it; he was conscious of the strength of Simpson's grip. He was also aware that he had said hardly anything.

As they left the imposing administration building and headed for a quonset hut, Jim said, "What did Dean Simpson mean by Mr. Chips?"

"Oh, he's a character in a winsome little book by James Hilton. A teacher, though an ignorant man. One of these character molders, and not a scholar at all. We want scholars, not campus characters."

Hotchkiss led him into a small waiting room. A man a little older than Jim was waiting there. He looked up belligerently, as though he might speak out against any usurpation of his turn. But Hotchkiss ignored him and pushed straight into Turner's inner office. Hotchkiss introduced Jim to Turner, wished Jim good luck, and said that he was sorry that he was busy, but he had an important essay to work on. Promptly Dr. Hotchkiss departed.

Turner asked Jim to sit down, the while beginning to finger some cards in a file box. "Are you married?" he asked. Jim said yes. "Children?"

"We have a baby boy, six weeks old."

"Then a two-bedroom place would do you." There was a loud knock at the door, and the man who had been waiting stood in the doorway, obviously angry.

"Are you or are you not going to see me?" asked the man.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Dr. Blossom," said Turner, though his tone of voice carried little apology in it. "I'll be with you in a few—" Turner snapped his fingers. "Say, come in. This is Dr.—what's your name?"

"Drummond," said Jim. Blossom came in and shook Jim's hand.

Turner said, "If I can get the three-bedroom place that Mrs.

Stoddard is in for you, Dr. Blossom, I could give your two-bedroom place to Dr. Drummond." Blossom seemed a little mollified, though the antagonism in his manner did not entirely disappear. Turner outlined what was involved in moving the widow of a professor out of a university house, and Blossom made it clear, though truculently, that he did not want to be getting something at the expense of and disadvantage to a widow. Turner reassured him: "She doesn't plan to stay on after the summer. Why don't you show your house to Dr. Drummond and see if he wants it?"

"All right," said Blossom.

Turner said, "It's four-thirty. Drop back in the morning and tell me if you like it. I have other places in my file, but they don't belong to the university and the rent would be lots higher."

So Jim got into Blossom's old car and they drove off. Blossom mentioned that he was an assistant professor of economics. He mentioned his alma mater and he asked Jim what Jim's was. Blossom pushed in the dashboard cigarette lighter and pulled out a package, offering one to Jim, but Jim declined it.

Blossom said, "Did those pirates offer you an instructorship or an assistant professorship?"

"Instructorship."

Blossom said, "You've got your union card, haven't you?"

"Union card?" asked Jim.

"Ph.D. You're Dr. Drummond, aren't you?"

"I've earned it, but it won't be awarded until June."

"But for all practical purposes you're a Ph.D., and they offered you a damn instructorship, and you've taken it." Blossom extended his hand. "Shake, fellow sucker. They did the same damn thing to me."

Jim was puzzled. "Did I do wrong to take it?"

Blossom said, "It depends on how badly they need you or want you. If you had said that you want to go home and talk to your wife about the offer, and want to weigh it against a couple of other offers, they would have given you an assistant professorship."

Jim said, "But I don't have other offers. And my wife leaves to me decisions about negotiations —"

"Hell, you didn't negotiate. You only got hooked," said Blossom. "Just like me. It took me three years to get the assistant professorship I could have gotten right away if I had played hard to get."

They turned down a side street of small but respectable houses. "That's us, the last one."

Blossom put on the brakes and Jim got out of the car. He did not care much for Blossom, though the way the two little children playing in the grass stood up and rushed to him made Jim soften his judgment a little. And when Blossom picked them both up Jim wondered if maybe Blossom was a decent person who had a grievance.

Blossom carried the children into the house. In the living room — a mused and dirty room — Mrs. Blossom was smoking and giving a bottle to a baby. She was red-haired and almost good-looking. Blossom said, "This is Dr. — what's your first name?"

"James. Jim."

"Jim Drummond. This is my wife Beth. I'm Tom. Jim's here to look at the dump. Turner is threatening to give us the Stoddard place."

Beth turned up her nose. "It's only bigger, not better. This place is a mess, Jim, the way I keep it, and it's a mess when I get it cleaned up." She set the bottle down and put the baby over her shoulder. "Fix us a drink, Tom, while I finish the baby."

Tom let the older children down to the floor and shooed them outside. "Do you care for Bourbon? That's all we have."

"Fine," said Jim.

"Do you have a family?" asked Beth.

"Yes. A boy, six weeks old."

"Oh. Our baby is a girl. She's ten weeks."

Tom came in with the whiskey. "Did Lefty Simpson give you his line about Mr. Chips?"

"Yes," said Jim.

"The same crap he handed me," said Blossom. He passed the glass to Jim. "You're all signed up and all that?"

"Yes," said Jim. In a little over an hour, when the telephone rates would go down, he would phone Elise and tell her he had taken the job.

Tom said, "I'll bet that not one of the high brass asked you if you can teach, if you like to teach, if you think you're a good teacher."

Jim smiled. "You win the bet. I got an earful about productive scholarship."

Tom laughed. "Three or four articles a year — is that what they said?"

"Yes. And a book every three or four years."

Tom nodded. "They don't care what crap you write, just so you publish. And the committee on promotions doesn't read what you've written; the bastards only weigh it."

They finished their drinks and Jim was shown around the small house. The bedrooms were small, especially the one which had the double bed and the crib. The rooms might have looked bigger, certainly better, if the beds had been made.

But the house would do, and the rent was not high, and the expectation of moving from the pinch of a graduate fellowship at Travers to an attractive salary — \$3600 — at Wilson made the house seem almost inviting.

Tom kept on talking about what were either his own grievances or general grievances against the administration, but Jim did not listen. Mostly these plaintive remarks were out of his ken and experience; and as the hour moved nearer to six o'clock he was becoming more and more impatient to telephone to Elise.

Another couple dropped in for a drink — Walter and Thelma Pierpont. Walter was in philosophy — also an assistant professor. Unlike Tom, Walter seemed cheerful and ebullient, and Thelma was almost mouselike in her shyness and reticence. There was another round of drinks and another set of questions about alma maters and places of Ph.D.'s, and from Walter the question of whether or not it was true that the eminent philosopher at Travers, Cushman, was really the personal skunk that everyone said he was. "I never met him or had any contact with him," said Jim.

The Pierponts drove him down to the hotel. They asked him if he wanted to come to their place for dinner, if he was free; it wasn't exactly an invitation, so that Jim said, "I'd like to —" Then Walter interrupted to say, "Well, if you can get away from Hotchkiss and that frump he's married to, call us up and we'll come get you." So Jim said goodbye, without disclosing that Hotchkiss and the frump had not invited him for the evening — in fact, nobody had.

Jim called Elise and she seemed to be overjoyed that he had the job; and the baby was fine. So he went to a movie that night; and he was in bed at an unaccustomed nine-thirty. Strange not to have

more notes to check and double-check; strange not to have three pages to redo so as to satisfy Dr. Dichter.

He still felt mixed emotions about Dr. Dichter. Certainly he could not complain, as other graduate students did, that he had insufficient guidance from his dissertation referee. If anything, Jim felt that he had had too much. And he had to admit to himself that the principal basis of his hostilities towards Dr. Dichter was the unmerciful lacing which Dr. Dichter had given him when he had turned in the first draft of his dissertation. The thickness of Dr. Dichter's accent had added a special quality of mortification, for Dichter had said, "Your English iss abominable. On your seminar reports, when dey vere written, dey were bad; but diss in the dissertation is atrocious." And Dichter had gone on and on. Oh, towards the end he had tried to soften things. "Trummond, you are de best lengwich student I ever had, but you can't write. You can't write at all."

Jim had no defense. "I didn't think it was so bad."

"De scholarship in it iss fine. Fine. Ven you speak in seminar you are clear; you are organized. Ven you turn to paper some demon gets in de vay. Did you take courses in writing at college?"

Jim remembered the interview with his faculty adviser at the end of his freshman year. A Mr. Tillman in economics. "If you take my advice, Drummond, sign up for courses with solid content. This stuff called creative writing and this stuff called speech is a lot of hooey." Tillman had lowered his voice. "I know the men who teach these sections; every one of them is a frustrated author. Not one of them has anything to say. Then how are they going to teach you how to write? If you want to write, write. But don't fool away your time with that kind of stuff."

So Jim had taken content courses, not courses in what Tillman had called trivial skills for trivial people. And since he was majoring in language and literature, he was seldom confronted with the need to prepare a written paper and he wasn't at all sure that he could do it even now with any adeptness at all.

But now his dissertation was in and accepted, and Dichter had gotten his name before Hotchkiss and now he had a job. Now he would be making a living. Now that they had a baby, that was important.

He tossed in bed for a while but sleep would not come. He got up and dressed and looked for a restaurant. It was full of students and it was noisy, just like the restaurants in Traversville. He had some scrambled eggs and some milk. From the next booth he overheard some students discuss their teachers. Partly they were critical; partly they were appreciative. Just as he had been as an undergraduate.

Except that he had always wanted to be a teacher. He never really knew why. Three divergent reasons often went through his mind. Maybe it was because when he was an older Boy Scout, it had been so much fun working with new young boys who came into the troop. It had brought him such a good feeling to show these younger boys things which he knew, and even a better feeling when he saw them absorb and then use what he had shown them. Or, maybe it was because he had idolized his high-school English teacher, Mr. Defoe, so much. Defoe had told him, usually after class, but once or twice right in class, that Jim had an unusually keen mind and uncanny gift of associating related elements. But, maybe, it was his reaction away from his father. For Mr. Drummond, a kindly but dull man, was a druggist, and he kept the drug-store open seven days a week, morning, noon, and night, and Jim had to help out after school and in the evenings and on weekends. He had noticed that high school teachers worked only five days a week, and only until three or three-thirty. Jim went to college, expecting to become a high school teacher, but instead, he decided to go on and get a Ph. D. and become a college teacher.

Was it, he asked himself, because a college teacher was confined to even fewer hours than a high school teacher? Wasn't it in his first year that he saw his botany instructor playing tennis at one-thirty in the afternoon?

He finished the eggs and the milk and he went back to the hotel. Sleep did not come immediately; but the triumph of having a job—even if he might have become an assistant professor instead of merely an instructor—made it pleasant, expectant sleeplessness. Before departing for Wilson he had gone to see Dr. Dichter, hoping to be briefed on what to do when he would be with Dr. Hotchkiss. But Dr. Dichter had a manuscript pad before him, and six open books piled uncertainly one on the other, and Dr. Dichter had said little more than that Hotchkiss was a good scholar and Wilson was

a fine university. Dichter had shaken his hand and wished him well, and Jim knew that this was sincere. But of specific guidance in the three-minute interview, he had had none. Jobs seemed scarce, especially at first-rate universities, and as Jim walked away from Dr. Dichter's office, his conclusion was that the item of prime importance was to get the Wilson appointment. The question of what kind of appointment it was seemed secondary, even unimportant.

Now he had the job. That much was good and fine. So, he finally fell asleep. When morning came Jim went to Mr. Turner's office to tell him that he would take the Blossom house. Then he flew home.

Dichter was pleased about the position. But Dichter too thought that as a man with a Ph.D. he should have had an assistant professorship. "Why did you take it? Why didn't you say you had to come back and consult me?"

All that Jim could say was, "I thought that I ought to take it."

Dichter spoke some ugly words in German. "It is not you I am scolding," he said. "I trusted Hotchkiss to do de right ting. Dis I vill remember." There was another flood of German, this time a brief one. "How much do dey allow you for moving dere?"

Jim squirmed. "That didn't come up at all."

Now Dichter exploded. "Dis iss too much! Here I intervenel! Here I come into de picture!"

A few days later, there came to Jim a letter from Dr. Hotchkiss, brief, cold, and to the point, that Wilson University normally allowed an instructor several hundred dollars for moving expenses, and that item had not been specified because it was always understood.

When September came, and Jim and Elise and the baby were settled, and when Jim had attended the orientation meetings for new faculty, he was exhilarated. His teaching schedule was made out tentatively: three three-hour courses in freshman English, and one three-hour course for sophomores. In none of these courses was Jim's specialty, the origin and growth of the English language, to appear, but Dr. Hotchkiss had said that the tentative schedule was always limited initially to the required courses and that electives were added after registration.

When he went to meet his first class he found a note on the desk

in the small office which he shared with three other new instructors: Dr. Hotchkiss wanted to see him. Something about the note worried him, and when he stood before his first class for the first time he felt apprehensive and his voice was hard to control. There were thirty boys and girls in the class, and if there was anything which they had in common, it was their indifference to him. He announced the name of the textbook prescribed for all the freshman courses, and then he began to lecture on the scope of the course: a survey of English literature. He found that he had to keep referring to his notes; he found that some students were busily writing as he spoke, but others simply stared at him or else stared out of the window. When the tower bells marked the end of the class, the students either rushed out or shuffled out, but none of them said anything to Jim. He had a feeling of having been ineffective, but he did not know in just what way. He knew that he would have to prepare his lectures carefully hereafter.

There was an hour's wait before his next class, so he headed for Henry Hall and Dr. Hotchkiss' office. To his surprise, his reception was relatively warm, and Hotchkiss even invited him and Elise for dinner on Saturday evening. Jim thought that this was the item, but it wasn't. Hotchkiss said, "Jim, we find that we've underestimated the registration. We have to ask you to take another section of freshman English." Even before Jim could answer, Hotchkiss went on, "I know that this will keep you from giving your elective in Old English — Dr. Dichter has written that you're brilliant in these things — but our instructional needs come first. I'll be writing to Dichter and telling him why we have to do this. But I want you to understand that I know how important it is for a man to be teaching in his specialty."

It occurred to Jim that he ought to say something more than just an acquiescent yes, that he ought to protest a little. So he said, "Will I be able to teach Old English the second semester?"

"I can't promise you that you will," said Hotchkiss. "But surely next year. And I appreciate very much your spirit in helping us out in this difficulty."

The teaching load, then, was fifteen hours a week, and not too badly spaced, except that the sophomore course came in the afternoon on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and therefore all mornings and three afternoons were broken up by classes.

They were invited to a party on Friday night, at the Pierponts', where Jim learned that most instructors at Wilson taught fifteen hours, and that the common consensus was that to give four sections of the same course was a rather light assignment, for it meant that the lectures could be repeated. "Actually," said Walter Pierpont, "you're teaching two courses. The extra sessions of freshman English don't require extra time in the preparation of lectures. It's a lighter load than teaching three courses for nine hours."

On Saturday night he discovered why Mrs. Hotchkiss was universally disliked. She kept interrupting her husband, she presided in the parlor as though she were a lecturer, and she directed her remarks in the form of mandatory advice to young wives on how to further their husbands' careers. Hotchkiss managed to get in the announcement that the English Club met once a month and that a paper was expected from each new member; and he commented that at the department meeting he would elaborate on his decision to have written exams required in freshman and sophomore classes every two weeks.

When they got home, Elise said, "This was awfully dull, Jim."

He nodded. And he found that something was bothering him, but just what it was he could not determine.

Two weeks later he found that his entire weekend was going to be consumed with grading papers. They had made a date with the Blossoms for Sunday night, and he was not finished when it was time to go. He knew that when they got home he would have to stay up until two and finish them.

At two in the morning he began to record in the standard notebook the grades which he had given. It was only then that he noticed that he had given very few A's, and that most of the grades were C's and D's. And there were some F's.

When he gave the papers back on Monday and Tuesday, he found that indifference was disappearing. In each section two or three students stopped at his desk to tell him that they thought that they had done better than the grade given. He smiled and said, "These are honest grades." But it was uncomfortable to feel the hostility directed at him by the unsuccessful.

There was not a home football game on Saturday afternoon, so a meeting of the English department was set. It began at two; it lasted until five. Beyond the routine business, Hotchkiss was proud

to announce that through his efforts the Research Grants Board had earmarked thirty thousand dollars to his department as a publication fund. "You people who have not published your doctoral dissertations can now prepare them for publication. I urge you to get at them as quickly as possible."

Jim would have liked to begin that very weekend, but the Blossoms were to come that evening, so he could not begin until the next morning. Elise liked to go to church; Jim could not go with her, but would baby-sit and grade papers while she was away. He made good progress in the morning and in the early afternoon, but then he realized that he had not yet finished preparing his lectures for Monday. He had to set aside the papers and to review the material he was to lecture on. Some of the students the next day seemed disappointed that he did not have their papers to return, and some even seemed indignant. After his afternoon class he had the dilemma of whether to finish grading the papers or begin on his next set of lectures on Wednesday and Thursday. In point of fact he did neither, for at his office he was visited by a freshman named Stephen Kilpatrick.

Steve was pimply and his voice had not yet finished changing. He was a nervous, fidgety boy, and unused to the pipe he was smoking and almost unable to manage the cigarettes which he lit in between. Courteously, even humbly, he explained his mission to Jim. "I just can't follow your lectures at all. They're way over my head."

"I'm sorry," said Jim.

"I'd like to talk over your lecture this morning with you, if you've got time."

"I'll take time," said Jim.

Steve pulled out his notebook. He began to read what he had written and Jim could see that Steve had grasped not one single idea, but had recorded only random sentences, as if a tape recorder with a faulty head had done its job only for ten seconds every two or three minutes.

Whatever negative reaction Jim began with towards Steve changed to sympathy, for Steve was neither surly nor hostile, but only a boy of limited ability who needed help. Only when one of the men who shared the office came in about five-thirty did Jim realize that he had consumed the entire afternoon, and that he had

neither graded the papers nor prepared for his coming classes.

That evening Dr. Hotchkiss telephoned him to say that he was putting Jim down for the November meeting of the English Club.

Jim stayed up until three, preparing his lectures and finishing the paper grading.

On Tuesday morning he found a note that there would be a special faculty meeting at three-thirty that afternoon. Dean Simpson presided; Jim was among twenty-five new faculty who were introduced and who were formally admitted by their colleagues into good standing as faculty members. Simpson welcomed them all and then went on to explain that on any roll-call vote only associate professors and professors voted, but on voice votes, everyone voted. Moreover, instructors and assistant professors were not only welcome to participate in the discussion of items on the agenda, but their views, indeed, were earnestly solicited. Dean Simpson kept looking at his watch. He kept staring around the room. "I am awaiting the arrival of the President," he said, "at whose instance I have called this meeting."

The President arrived fifteen minutes later. He arose on Simpson's introduction and spoke briefly. He welcomed home the old faculty and he greeted the new faculty. Then he explained what was on his mind. Alumni, whom he disregarded entirely in football matters, had been communicating with him about what might be described as the spirit of things at Wilson, this in an unfailingly constructive and solicitous manner. Since the age was one of great confusions and perplexities, many of the alumni had felt that a classroom relationship between professor and student was insufficient, and that Wilson was not meeting its full responsibility to its students in adhering too rigidly to an academic shaping of the relationships. While the university had a counseling service, namely, a Dean of Men and a Dean of Women, and while it had a chaplain and other ministers and a rabbi and a priest available, the fact was that more personal contact and more counseling were needed. The President had sought and gotten a contribution of twenty thousand dollars to study the counseling needs at Wilson, and he hoped that the university would be able to implement whatever results and recommendations would come out of the study. But meanwhile, much as he hated to add to the burden of the faculty, he felt impelled to ask the faculty to assume some tem-

porary responsibility for a counseling program. "I don't mean the adviser system for registration; I mean a situation in which faculty are in relatively close contact with the students whom they teach."

The President turned the chair back to Dean Simpson for the faculty to discuss the matter. The first to arise was George Thwait of the history department, who was always the first to attack the administration. "Does the President have in mind some plan by which I can be in close contact with the two hundred enrolled in my sophomore history class?"

The President smiled blandly. "I must leave these matters to the proved wisdom of my faculty," he said.

Dr. Hotchkiss arose to praise the President for his insight and daring, and he proposed that the faculty appoint a committee to work out some plan and report back to the faculty. Someone else proposed that the faculty adopt the President's plan in principle and then appoint a committee to work out the details. Philip Strolheim in economics arose to ask how someone as busy as he could possibly take on more work, and the President replied that he could not spell out the plan, he could only confront the faculty with the need. Others, mostly full professors, arose to express their fear that an unbearable burden would be put on the faculty, and it began to look as though the President's proposal would be turned down by the faculty—which would have put the President to the trouble of implementing it through Deans and involuntary assignments. Fortunately for the President, Tom Blossom asked for the floor. He denied that the faculty were responsible for anything more than to teach; he declared that he had never understood why a chaplain was foisted onto an academic community, and if a chaplain could not cope with the spiritual needs of the university, then the university ought to get a chaplain who could, and finally, he declared that the way to handle the problem, if it was a problem, was through the admissions office. If the admissions office would admit only competent, matured students, instead of large numbers of the incompetent offspring of the rich alumni, the whole problem would not arise.

The discussion was promptly closed, and the faculty voted overwhelmingly to adopt some kind of counseling program.

Three weeks later Jim learned by letter that he was the adviser to twelve students. He learned, too, that assistant professors ad-

vised eight, associates three, and full professors none. The recommending committee had consisted of eight professors and three associates.

Jim did not resent the obligation. Ever since the afternoon with Steve Kilpatrick he had found himself faced with the issue that in his own mind he was teaching not a course but groups of human beings, and that these people were quite as important as the content which he was trying to convey. He found that only six of his advisees were in his classes, and the other six needed to be contacted in some way. Secretarial help, he learned, was available only for associate and full professors, so he wrote out by hand his invitations for the students to visit his office or his home.

But students, classes, papers, and a little time devoted to Elise and the baby were keeping him busy. It was the first of November, and he was to be on the program at the English Club. He had had no time to prepare a paper, or indeed, to consider what kind of paper to prepare. He wanted to ask Dr. Hotchkiss what to do, but somehow or other he kept seeing in his mind not the vision of the quiet retiring man but the formidable features of Mrs. Hotchkiss. Instead of Hotchkiss, he went to see Venturi, who had given the October paper. "What I read is a chapter from a book I'm working on. I wouldn't write a special paper if I were you. Isn't there something in your doctoral dissertation you can use?"

The idea appealed to Jim, but it also made him uneasy that as yet he had not acted on Hotchkiss' invitation to prepare the dissertation for publication. He must get to that; maybe he could put in some time during the Christmas vacation.

He leafed through his bound dissertation. A chapter that dealt with the gradual desuetude of inflected subjunctives in the Elizabethan period seemed to be a cohesive unit. Besides, it was in this chapter that he had expressed the hypothesis which Dichter had liked, that the subjunctive inflections, as in Shakespeare, were purely a literary device and that in point of fact that subjunctive had already disappeared from the spoken language. This would be his paper.

Jim had by now gotten into a routine. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after his afternoon class he spent the remainder of the time with those students who were advisees or who did poorly on his exams; others he saw on Tuesday or Thursday

evenings. Friday night he spent at the library in the periodical room.

The periodical room was the pride of Wilson's librarian. Not only was the collection complete, but the display and filing racks were out in the open, arranged by the Dewey decimal system — topically, that is — and two whole tiers were devoted to English. That is, to professorial journals. There was the periodical of the national organization and of each of the regional sections; and almost every university seemed bent on publishing a quarterly. Philological journals were in a separate adjoining tier. On Friday nights Jim found that he could do little more than handle the table of contents of a few of the journals. For such things as the *Yale Review*, the *Sewanee Review*, and the like, he found no time at all.

And when he went from the periodical room to the lobby he passed the bulletin board where there were displayed the dust jackets of the recently acquired novels. Jim had not read a novel since coming to Wilson: there hadn't been time. The thought occurred to him that he was not only not reading novels, but he was not reading anything at all not directly associated with his teaching. It would be different next year, when his courses would have already been prepared and a year's experience in teaching them would lie behind him.

The night before the meeting of the English Club, Jim had an accumulation of two sets of ungraded papers before him, but he realized that it was more important at that moment to go over what he was going to read the next night, because he had to put his best foot forward. The baby was in bed and Elise was listening to the radio and lamenting that they could not afford a television set. Jim had put in about a half hour when the doorbell rang. It was Steve Kilpatrick with a student whom Steve introduced as Jeff Wilmer. "I was telling Jeff," said Steve, "how you discussed taking notes with me, and how you've helped me get on the beam, and I told him that I was sure that you would be glad to see him too."

"Sure," said Jim. He ushered them in, glancing anxiously at the manuscript open on his desk. When they were seated, Jim said, "I imagine that you've talked to your faculty adviser."

"Yes," said Jeff. "Every time I've been to see Dr. Linville, he tells me to come back next week."

He was a diffident boy and shy, but he could be abruptly assertive.

For two hours Jim talked with Jeff. When the boys left, after thanking Jim profusely, Jim felt very good. But when he returned to the manuscript, he felt very tired and sleepy. He got Elise to fix him some coffee and he worked until two-thirty. Three times she called him to come to bed, and the third time she even became angry.

The baby woke him up at six, and bleary eyed he returned to the manuscript. It was in pretty good shape, but he himself wasn't. He dragged himself through his two morning classes, and he lay down after lunch before his third class. He fell asleep, but only until he sneezed himself awake. He thought of cutting the afternoon class, but he remembered that two advisees were due to come in after the class, so over Elise's protests he went off. At supper time he was sneezing hard, so much so that the baby-sitter, Mrs. Dingle, volunteered the suggestion that he go to bed. But Elise had gotten all dressed up, and it wasn't right to disappoint people and ruin the program.

As he stood nervously before the group to read, he had the feeling that the paper was neither very good nor of any great importance. Several times during it he sneezed, and once he had a spell of coughing. When it was over, the applause was polite, and in the discussion there were compliments paid to him. The retired professor of Old English, Lester Whitman, paid Jim the dubious compliment of calling the paper interesting and of saying that Jim had been unduly influenced by Dr. Dichter's overemphasis on the distinction between spoken and written English, and that Jim's theory did not hold water. Whitman then went on to speak for twenty minutes on the general character of the relationship between the written language and the spoken, with frequent citations from Homer, *Beowulf*, and *The Song of Roland*. When Whitman was through, Hotchkiss called on Jim to reply, but Jim had sneezed through some of Whitman's most telling points; moreover, he did not feel up to answering, so he simply said that it was very gracious of Whitman to have given his effort so much attention and he felt benefited by it and would certainly consider Whitman's comments when he came to prepare the paper for publication.

Hotchkiss congratulated him privately, more for his skill in handling Whitman than for the paper itself. "You didn't read it as though you were fully familiar with it," said Hotchkiss. "That must be because of your cold."

Others too spoke pleasantly to him. Mrs. Hotchkiss, though, took him and Elise aside. "You fell down, young man," she said. "You were lethargic, and you were hard to follow. I'm disappointed."

Jim was quite ill the next day; it was necessary to call the doctor. Elise forgot to phone the Dean's office to say that Jim could not meet his classes, and at ten-forty the office phoned to say that some students were wondering what was what.

He could not go to the library. On Friday night, he sat up to correct the accumulated papers. Again the doorbell rang, and again it was Jeff, this time alone. Elise tried to shoo him away, but Jim said that he could stay a half hour. It stretched out to about an hour and a quarter.

He taught his Saturday morning classes, and during the afternoon and evening, and all day Sunday, morning and afternoon and evening, he graded papers, and he finally finished. But he was not really prepared for his lecture on Monday; he knew the material, of course, but he had not thought through a segment planned and integrated for the class hour. He could hear the students shuffle their feet, and he finally dismissed them about eight minutes early.

In the lunchroom he ran into Hotchkiss who told him that his paper had shown considerable merit, and he hoped that Jim was getting ready to publish it. "It's part of my dissertation," said Jim. "I hope to get that ready over Christmas to submit to you for publication."

Hotchkiss clucked his tongue. "Why didn't you speak to me after the department meeting? I've already overcommitted our money." He looked at Jim most disapprovingly. "You shouldn't let something so important await our chance meeting."

When he told Elise about it, she lit into him. "Hotchkiss is right. You should have spoken to him that very night."

"I haven't forgotten about it," he said. "It's been on my mind."

"You should have spoken to him," she said.

Hotchkiss summoned him to his office early in December. "I

want you to read your paper on the subjunctive at the national meeting of the Society of Professors of Literature in Chicago. The meeting is right after Christmas."

Jim started to say that he and Elise had planned to go to his father's home for Christmas, but he did not want to cross Hotchkiss. It was impractical to take Elise and the baby to his home, go to Chicago and return home; so they stayed at Wilson over Christmas, and Mr. Drummond came there.

At Chicago, Dr. Prelinger of Northwestern, who customarily attacked every young scholar, began to tear Jim's paper to shreds. Dr. Dichter arose to interrupt; he shook his fist at Prelinger and called him a dogmatic bore. Dichter was forced to sit down; later, when he was granted the floor, he called Jim's paper one of the most brilliant ever presented to the society.

But still later that day Dichter told him privately that he had not found the paper much improved over the version he remembered from the dissertation and that Jim should not have been content merely to read a paper in some old form. But a more cutting criticism was still to come. "Hotchkiss tells me dat you are frittering your time away wid students."

Jim became indignant. "That isn't true."

"Hotchkiss told me that it iss true."

"We all have advisees and I've only done what I'm supposed to do."

"Hotchkiss told me dat somebody complained dat you were advising his advisee. Iss dat true?"

Jim tried to think. Jeff. "Well, there was one student who sought me out —"

"You're not dere to pamper de students. You're dere to teach and to become a finished scholar. De devil wid de students. Iss more dan one out of ten better dan a dummkopf?"

That night Hotchkiss called him to his room. "Don't mind Prelinger," said Hotchkiss. "He's an unhappy man. He has a sadistic streak in him."

Jim said, "Dr. Hotchkiss, did you tell Dr. Dichter that I was frittering my time away with students?"

"Not at all," said Hotchkiss smoothly. "I made the comment that you were taking this advisership much too seriously. That is my

judgment, you know. And I have hesitated to mention it to you, but Jerry Linville did speak to me about your advising one of his advisees. You must really learn how to protect yourself from students, Jim. Strategy is the way to do it. Do you recall the afternoon when the President broached the matter? I didn't make the mistake that that upstart Blossom made of opposing the President. I merely suggested what amounted to an oblique way of killing it; of adopting it and of having a committee kill it."

Jim looked straight at him. "Are you telling me not to do a conscientious job with my advisees?"

Hotchkiss returned his look though some expression, either of distaste or of contempt, seemed to have suffused his face. "Of course not. What I am telling you is that you can do a conscientious job without its interfering with your scholarly progress. Have you written anything this year? If so, I don't know about it. And have you been doing any reading? I published quite an important paper in the *Idaho Studies in English Literature*, and I dare say that you are one of the few, or even the only one in the department, who hasn't read it, for you alone have abstained from commenting on it."

Jim flushed. He was too angry to realize that Hotchkiss had been petty and that Hotchkiss was aware of it and that Hotchkiss was now trying to appease him by going on to say that the first year was always a difficult year. In the midst of Hotchkiss' glib apology Jim excused himself, and Hotchkiss changed from the offender to the offended.

In February Steve and Jeff visited him with their report cards. Steve had pulled through with all B's, but Jeff had gotten an A in English. "I owe it to you," said Jeff. Then Steve said, "At the beginning of the term it was hard to follow your lectures. That still happens every once in a while. But, gee, some of your lectures are really terrific."

The compliment almost overwhelmed Jim. He wanted to ask for more details, but he thought that it might be unbecoming. Besides, he thought he understood. Those lectures for which he had felt completely prepared had gone beautifully. Twice—or was it three times?—a couple of students had started to clap their hands. The hand clapping had not spread, for most of the students were hurrying out to their next class. But Jim had come to know the

difference between a class which he made listless and disinterested and one which he had stirred.

Yes, his lectures needed preparing. And some of the literature he was speaking about needed his rereading. And his perspectives would be all the broader if he would take the time to read some books which he had somehow missed.

But there wasn't enough time for rereading and for more reading. And he knew that he had to do some writing. In March he found a couple of evenings to work on revising the dissertation for publication, though he had no idea as to how it would be published, for surely no commercial publisher would be the slightest bit interested. He spoke to Hotchkiss who told him coldly that in October he should raise the matter again, because there might be some more money available in the new year. Three days later the baby got sick and spent a month in the hospital and Jim found that his small amount of accumulated money was all gone, and he owed two doctors a good sum of money. He had thought that he would spend the summer in rewriting his dissertation, but Dichter offered him a job teaching summer school, and Elise insisted that they should get out of debt immediately. He wrote to Dichter accepting the appointment.

In April there was a series of faculty meetings at which a committee which had spent four years in studying the curriculum was ready to report. The report was accepted the second week in April, and the curricular changes were to be introduced for freshmen in the fall. The work in freshman English was to be altered completely.

In September Jim found himself with a new freshman course to prepare and a course in Old English to work up, and only the sophomore course to repeat. Then Elise announced that she was pregnant. Her first pregnancy had been an easy one; now, though, she was often nauseated and more often just needed to be on her back. Elise had never been a complainer and Jim knew that it would be unfair for him to complain about the amount of household work he had to do.

He did not speak to Hotchkiss in October because he was no further along.

Moreover, his new crop of twelve advisees was only in theory a supplanting of his old ones, for several of the old continued to come

to see him. And Steve and Jeff even brought him more students. Jim realized that it was in his own interest not to consume precious time on men to whom he had no responsibility. Moreover, when he talked it over with Blossom and with Pierpont, they only laughed at him. Blossom said, "To hell with the students; you think of yourself first." Pierpont said, "To be frank about it, the word is getting around that Hotchkiss is displeased because you haven't announced some program of publication."

He spent a sleepless night. He wondered if his willingness to lend a hand to students was some unconscious wish to avoid the drudgery involved in scholarship. Not that the zest was gone. But to return to his dissertation was a task of unrelieved agony and boredom. And the suspicion was born in him that even if his dissertation were polished to a high gloss of perfection, it wasn't really a very important thing. What difference did it really make if the subjunctive mood had the history he had supposed, or if it had one akin to Whitman's view, or to Prelinger's? Under the spell of Dichter's guidance he had never even raised the question of why scholarship, or what scholarship. The unnaturally deferred question now began to strike him hard, and it upset him so that the more he confronted the matter, the more he was persuaded that scholarship — at least the facet of it in his own ken — was of little importance. It was at best a hobby, of the kind that in other people resulted in collecting coins or in building and rebuilding a hi-fi set.

He tried to focus the issue more sharply. Scholarship included medical research, and certainly there was relevancy to that. And less directly but with some relevancy, history had some lessons to teach, or at least some clarity to furnish; or philosophy contributed to the broadening of a person's spirit. But what the hell good did it do anybody to know that the subjunctive mood had fallen into disuse three hundred years ago, not one hundred years ago?

Wasn't the kind of thing he did in freshman English more important? There he was helping students to understand literature, and literature was a matter of ideas important to men. And if men needed literature because it was important, then men must be important, and if men were important, why was the faculty so scornful of advisees?

He could not settle the issue, and he awoke with a splitting head-

ache. A couple of aspirins relieved him, but the headache returned late in the afternoon when he came home from the grocery and had to get down on the floor with the baby — until it was time for him to cook supper.

He missed the October meeting of the English Club because Elise wasn't well; and he got to the November meeting late because the baby had taken to incessant crying whenever Jim started to leave the house. By accident he sat next to Dean Simpson; the paper was by a graduate student who had brought a seminar paper dealing with the influence of the *Book of Tobit* on writers in the post-Elizabethan period, and Jim recognized that the paper was replete with errors. But what difference does it make? he kept asking himself.

Simpson shook hands with him when the paper was over. "Are you working on anything?" asked the Dean.

Jim mumbled something about the subjunctive mood, and Simpson nodded his head approvingly.

Elise was not fit to travel at Christmas time, and besides, the annual meeting of the society was scheduled to be held at Wilson College. Hotchkiss put Jim in charge of housing the incoming faculty. He wanted Dr. Dichter to stay at their place, but there really wasn't room, and Elise wasn't up to it. The vacation came and went, and the dissertation still wasn't rewritten.

Jeff Wilmer brightened their Christmas by sending them a crate of Florida oranges, and Jeff's father visited Wilson in January and brought Elise a scarf. "You've meant a lot to my boy," said Mr. Wilmer. "I am certainly grateful to you for the interest you've taken in him."

Thereafter Jeff came around even oftener. Sometimes he babysat. When he did, though, he stayed on endlessly talking over both real and imaginary problems with Jim. His girl, Muriel, was transferring to Wilson in February.

Jeff brought Muriel to the house promptly. She was big and raw-boned, while Jeff was only of medium height and small. Jim did not care for her, and Elise quickly took a dislike to her. Elise said, "She's not right for Jeff."

Two nights later Walter Pierpont phoned. As usual, Walter seemed to have a line on everything which was happening around

the college. "Jim, old boy, I don't like to worry you. But I think Hotchkiss is very much dissatisfied. He thinks you're not much of a bet for future scholarship."

Jim lowered his voice so that Elise would not hear and become upset. "What does it mean?"

"You'd better get down on your southern side and get something ready for publication. Otherwise they won't keep you on."

Jim told Elise that he had forgotten something at the library. Once out of the house, he phoned Tom Blossom who met him downtown. Tom nodded his head. "Walter's told me. What's wrong, Jim? How come you're not publishing?"

"I don't really know," said Jim. "I guess it's because I don't use my time right. The students —"

"Cut out the damn students," said Tom.

"But it's not that alone. I teach fifteen hours. There are papers to grade. Three of my courses are first-time, and they take a lot of work. There's just never a real stretch of time —"

Tom nodded. "The bastards demand that an instructor publish, and the only way he can is to have the time. So they give practically no work to a professor and they overload an instructor and they say, 'Publish.'"

"Then what do you do?" asked Jim.

"You've just got to publish. Don't prepare so well for your classes, and turn the students away, and sit on your rear end and write."

Jim stayed up that night working on the dissertation again. It was painful to him. But he worked through most of the introduction and made notes about fresh material he would have to look up and about old material he would have to recheck.

He tried to work the next night, but Jeff came to see him, obviously upset. Muriel had been giving other boys dates, and Jeff was intensely jealous. It occurred to Jim that maybe Jeff needed some psychiatric guidance, but by eleven Jeff was pretty well calmed down.

The biennial Sparks lectures were the next week — three nights in a row — and they were under the English department. The lecturer was a Britisher named Dickinson. The first two nights, Hotchkiss glowed with pride. The third night the lecturer attacked what he called the Germanic-American tradition of as-dry-as-dust scholar-

ship, calculated to kill literary appreciation, and practiced by petty minds who committed mayhem on literature. The lecturer picked three stereotyped figures, one of whom might have been Dichter, a second Whitman, and the third Hotchkiss. His satire was brilliant, and his sarcasm was cutting, and the faculty present so relished the patent way in which Hotchkiss fitted the third stereotype that the hall rocked with their laughter.

Jim was not amused. He did not mind the attack on the Hotchkisses. But what he had heard strengthened his own suspicion that scholarship, of the kind he was committed to, was of no real worth.

Two days later Hotchkiss, in need of a whipping boy, summoned Jim to his office. Outwardly he was kindness itself. "I just want to assure you of my deep personal interest in you. I don't want you to fall by the wayside through missing the opportunities before you. I earnestly hope that you will be able before April to tell me that you are publishing, for I want to recommend you for another two years."

"I've been working," said Jim. "I'm getting my dissertation in shape."

"You didn't come to see me in October."

"I didn't get enough done this summer."

"H'm. Maybe you ought to publish some part of it in a journal. Maybe the part you read in Chicago last year."

"If you think I should."

"My goodness, man! You've got to publish something!" Jim had never heard Hotchkiss quite so explosive.

That night, when he finished preparing for the next morning's lecture, he turned not to the introduction but to the chapter on the subjunctive. He read it and reread it, and then he thought that he saw the rearrangement it needed to be a published article.

He worked throughout March, neglecting his classes and only skimming through the papers he was grading. Jeff had begun to come around every night at eleven, and to drink a cup of coffee with Jim. Elise was usually asleep; or if not, they sat in the bedroom while Jeff unburdened himself about Muriel to both of them. Things were not going badly; he and Muriel had the understanding that she was going to be doing some dating, but she was still Jeff's girl.

Towards the middle of March, Jim finished the rough draft of

the revised article. He planned to begin to type it that night, but Jeff came early. He had taken Muriel to dinner and they had had a quarrel. Muriel had been dating a man on the basketball team, and Jeff hadn't liked it. The man was — well, he didn't respect girls.

The baby got sick the next night, and Jim could do no typing. The paper ran thirty pages, and it would cost almost eighteen dollars to have it typed, and they could not afford the money. Elise tried to get up to attend to the baby, but she vomited, and after Jim cleaned up, Elise began to cry and to say that she was a real burden.

The last week in March began, and the paper was still not typed. Jim had his strategy all set: On March 31st, he would walk into Hotchkiss' office and announce that he had sent off the paper. But there were still some pages to be done, and some papers had to be graded, and some minimum preparation for class had to be done.

On March 28th he finished the draft. He began to reread it, and he saw both typographical errors and places for small changes. On the night of the 29th he rewrote a few sections; there were about eight pages which needed to be typed.

He had just sat down to the typewriter the next night, the 30th, when Jeff walked in without knocking. "I've just got to see you!" he said. Elise was awake, so Jim suggested that they go into her room. "No, I've got to see you alone," said Jeff. "Please close the door."

Jim said to himself that this was getting to be too much. But he closed the door. As soon as it was shut, he heard an angry outburst from Jeff. "That guy's been screwing Muriel. Screwing her! She admitted it tonight." Then Jeff buried his head in his arms and began to weep.

Jim talked to him, but Jeff remained incoherent. Jim tried to get him to walk over to the infirmary and get a sedative, but Jeff only wanted to sit and cry. Then Jim said firmly, "Jeff, I've just got to finish a job tonight."

Jeff sobbed back at him, "I'll just sit here; you go on and work."

"I need it quiet, Jeff. You go on back to your room and come see me tomorrow." Jeff's response was a new flood of tears. "Damn it!" said Jim. "I've just got to get this job done and you've got to go home. Stand up and be a man, Jeff."

Jeff doubled his fists and he glared at Jim. "Don't you dare say that to me, you bastard —"

"Now, Jeff — "

"That's what Dr. Linville's said to me." Jeff began to cry again. "What'll I do, Dr. Drummond?"

"I can't talk to you tonight, Jeff. Come back tomorrow."

"But — "

"Come back tomorrow," said Jim, firmly.

"There won't be a tomorrow," said Jeff. He got up and walked out. Jim shook his head; Jeff had such a melodramatic side to him. Jim turned to the typewriter.

An hour later Jeff jumped to his death from his fourth-floor dormitory room. Jim read about it in the morning paper.

He did not go to his classes that last day of March. He did not go to Mr. Hotchkiss' office. The baby cried, but he let Elise stumble to him. She fixed Jim his meals, but he did not eat.

He sat at his desk, fingering the manuscript. All day he sat there, fingering it. All evening he sat there, as if in a stupor.

Elise went to bed about ten.

At eleven the baby began to cry.

Jim stood up. He took a step to the baby, and then he turned back to his desk. He picked up the manuscript, divided it into two even piles, and carefully tore each pile into shreds. Then he went in to pick up the baby.

MISS LEONORA WHEN LAST SEEN

BY PETER TAYLOR

HERE IN Thomasville we are all concerned over the whereabouts of Miss Leonora Logan. She has been missing for two weeks, and though a half dozen postcards have been received from her, stating that she is in good health and that no anxiety should be felt for her safety, still the whole town can talk of nothing else. She was last seen in Thomasville heading south on Logan Lane, which is the narrow little street that runs alongside her family property. At four-thirty on Wednesday afternoon — Wednesday before last, that is to say — she turned out of the dirt driveway that comes down from her house and drove south on the Lane toward its intersection with the bypass of the Memphis-Chattanooga highway. She has not been seen since. Officially, she is away from home on a little trip. Unofficially, in the minds of the townspeople, she is a missing person, and because of events leading up to her departure none of us will rest easy until we know that the old lady is safe at home again.

Miss Leonora's half dozen postcards have come to us from points in as many states: Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky — in that order. It is considered a fair guess that her next card will come from Missouri or Arkansas, and that the one after that will be from Mississippi or Louisiana. She seems to be orbiting her native state of Tennessee. But, on the other hand, there is no proof that she has not crossed the state, back and forth, a number of times during the past two weeks. She is quite an old lady, and is driving a 1942 Dodge convertible. Anyone travelling in

the region indicated should watch out for two characteristics of her driving. First, she hates to be overtaken and passed by other vehicles — especially by trucks. The threat of such is apt to make her bear down on the accelerator and try to outdistance the would-be passer. Or, if passed, she can be counted on to try to overtake and pass the offender at first chance. The second characteristic is: When driving after dark, she invariably refuses to dim her lights unless an approaching car has dimmed its own while at least five hundred feet away. She is a good judge of distances, and she is not herself blinded by bright lights on the highway. And one ought to add that, out of long habit and for reasons best known to herself, Miss Leonora nearly always drives by night.

Some description will be due, presently, of this lady's person and of how she will be dressed while travelling. But that had better wait a while. It might seem prejudicial and even misleading with reference to her soundness of mind. And any question of that sort, no matter what the rest of the world may think, has no bearing upon the general consternation that her going away has created here.

Wherever Miss Leonora Logan is today, she knows in her heart that in the legal action recently taken against her in Thomasville there was no malice directed toward her personally. She knows this, and would say so. At this very moment she may be telling some new-found friend the history of the case — because I happen to know that when she is away from home she talks to people about herself and her forebears as she would never do to anyone here. And chances are she is giving a completely unbiased version of what has happened, since that is her way.

The cause of all our present tribulation is this: The Logan property, which Miss Leonora inherited from one of her paternal great-uncles and which normally upon her death would have gone to distant relatives of hers in Chicago, has been chosen as the site for our county's new consolidated high school. A year and a half ago, Miss Leonora was offered a fair price for the three-acre tract and the old house, and she refused it. This summer, condemnation proceedings were begun, and two weeks ago the county court granted the writ. This will seem to you a bad thing for the town to have done, especially in view of the fact that Miss Leonora has given long years of service to our school system. She retired ten years ago after teaching for twenty-five years in the old high school. To be sure, four of

us who are known hereabouts as Miss Leonora Logan's favorites among the male citizenry refused to have any part in the action. Two of us even preferred to resign from the school board. But still, times do change, and the interests of one individual cannot be allowed to hinder the progress of a whole community. Miss Leonora understands that. And she knows that her going away can only delay matters for a few weeks at most. Nevertheless, she is making it look very bad for Thomasville, and we want Miss Leonora to come home.

The kind of jaunt that she has gone off on isn't anything new for the old lady. During the ten years since her retirement she has been setting out on similar excursions rather consistently every month or so, and never, I believe, with a specific itinerary or destination in mind. Until she went away this time, people had ceased to bother themselves with the question of her whereabouts while she was gone or to be concerned about any harm that might come to her. We have been more inclined to think of the practical value her trips have for us. In the past, you see, she was never away for more than a week or ten days, and on her return she would gladly give anyone a full and accurate account of places visited and of the condition of roads travelled. It has, in fact, become the custom when you are planning an automobile trip to address yourself to Miss Leonora on the public square one day and ask her advice on the best route to take. She is our authority not only on the main highways north, south, east, and west of here, in a radius of six or eight hundred miles, but even on the secondary and unimproved roads in places as remote as Brown County, Indiana, and the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Her advice is often very detailed, and will include warnings against "single-lane bridges" or "soft shoulders" or even "cops patrolling in unmarked cars."

It is only the facts she gives you, though. She doesn't express appreciation for the beauty of the countryside or her opinion of the character of towns she passes through. The most she is likely to say is that such-and-such a road is "regarded" as the scenic route, or that a certain town has a "well worked-out traffic system." No one can doubt that while driving, Miss Leonora keeps her eyes and mind on the road. And that may be the reason why we have never worried about her. But one asks oneself, What pleasure can she ever have

derived from these excursions? She declares that she hates the actual driving. And when giving advice on the roads somewhere she will always say that it is a dull and tedious trip and that the traveller will wish himself home in Thomasville a thousand times before he gets to wherever he is going.

Miss Leonora's motivation for taking these trips was always, until the present instance, something that it seemed pointless even to speculate on. It just seemed that the mood came on her and she was off and away. But if anything happens to her now, all the world will blame *us* and say we *sent* her on this journey, sent her out alone and possibly in a dangerous frame of mind. In particular, the blame will fall on the four timid male citizens who were the last to see her in Thomasville (for I do not honestly believe we will ever see her alive here again) and who, as old friends and former pupils of hers at the high school, ought to have prevented her going away. As a matter of fact, I am the one who opened the car door for the old lady that afternoon and politely assisted her into the driver's seat — and without even saying I thought it unwise of her to go. I *thought* it unwise, but at the moment it was as if I were still her favorite pupil twenty years before, and as if I feared she might reprove me for any small failure of courtesy like not opening the car door.

That's how the old lady is—or was. Whatever your first relation to her might have been, she would never allow it to change, and some people even say that that is why she discourages us so about the trips we plan. She cannot bear to think of us away from Thomasville. She thinks this is where all of us belong. I remember one day at school when some boy said to her that he wished he lived in a place like Memphis or Chattanooga. She gave him the look she usually reserved for the people she caught cheating. I was seated in the front row of the class that day, and I saw the angry patches of red appear on her broad, flat cheeks and on her forehead. She paused a moment to rearrange the combs in her hair and to give the stern yank to her corset that was a sure sign she was awfully mad. (We used to say that, with her sparse figure, she only wore a corset for the sake of that expressive gesture.) The class was silent, waiting. Miss Leonora looked out the window for a moment, squinting up her eyes as if she could actually make out the Memphis or even

the Chattanooga skyline on the horizon. Then, turning back to the unfortunate boy, she said, grinding out her words to him through clenched teeth, "I wish I could *throw* you there!"

But it is ten years now since Miss Leonora retired, and, strange as it may sound, the fact of her having once taught in our school system was never introduced into the deliberations of the school board last spring — their deliberations upon whether or not they ought to sue for condemnation of the Logan home place. No doubt it was right that they didn't let this influence their decision. But what really seems to have happened is that nobody even recalled that the old lady had once been a teacher — or nobody but a very few, who did not want to remind the others.

What they remembered, to the exclusion of everything else, and what they always remember is that Miss Leonora is the last of the Logan family in Thomasville, a family that for a hundred years and more did all it could to impede the growth and progress of our town. It was a Logan, for instance, who kept the railroad from coming through town; it was another Logan who prevented the cotton mill and the snuff factory from locating here. They even kept us from getting the county seat moved here until after the Civil War, when finally it became clear that nobody was ever going to buy lots up at Logan City, where they had put the first courthouse. Their one idea was always to keep the town unspoilt, unspoilt by railroads or factories or even county politics. Perhaps they should not be blamed for wanting to keep the town unspoilt. Yet I am not quite sure about that. It is a question that even Miss Leonora doesn't feel sure about. Otherwise, why does she always go into that question with the people she meets away from home?

I must tell you about the kind of lodging Miss Leonora takes when she stops for rest, and about the kind of people she finds to talk to. She wouldn't talk to you or me, and she wouldn't put up at a hotel like mine, here on the square, or even at a first-class motel like one of those out on the Memphis-Chattanooga Bypass. I have asked her very direct questions about this, pleading a professional interest, and I have filled in with other material furnished by her friends of the road who have from time to time stopped in here at my place.

On a pretty autumn day like today, she will have picked a farmhouse that has one of those little home-lettered signs out by the

mailbox saying "Clean Rooms for Tourists — Modern Conveniences." (She will, that is, unless she has changed her ways and taken to a different life, which is the possibility that I do not like to think of.) She stops only at places that are more or less in that category — old-fashioned tourist homes run by retired farm couples or, if the place is in town, by two old-maid sisters. Such an establishment usually takes its name from whatever kind of trees happen to grow in the yard — Maple Lawn or Elmwood or The Oaks. Or when there is a boxwood plant, it will be called Boxwood Manor. If the place is in the country, like the one today, it may be called Oak Crest.

You can just imagine how modern the modern conveniences at Oak Crest are. But it is cheap, which is a consideration for Miss Leonora. And the proprietors are probably good listeners, which is another consideration. She generally stops in the daytime, but since even in the daytime she can't sleep for long, she is apt to be found helping out with the chores. Underneath the Oak Crest "Clean Rooms for Tourists" sign there may be one that says "Sterile Day-Old Eggs" or, during the present season, "Delicious Apples and Ripe Tomatoes." It wouldn't surprise me if you found Miss Leonora today out by the roadside assisting with the sale of Oak Crest's garden produce. And if that's the case, she is happy in the knowledge that any passerby will mistake her for the proprietress's mother or old-maid sister, and never suppose she is a paying guest. In her carefully got-up costume she sits there talking to her new friend. Or else she is in the house or in the chicken yard, talking away while she helps out with the chores. . . . It is Miss Leonora's way of killing time — killing time until night falls and she can take to the road again.

Miss Leonora is an intellectual woman, and at the same time she is an extremely practical and simple kind of person. This makes it hard for any two people to agree on what she is really like. It is hard even for those of us who were her favorites when we went to school to her. For, in the end, we didn't really know her any better than anybody else did. Sometimes she would have one of us up to her house for coffee and cookies on a winter afternoon, but it was hardly a social occasion. We went up there strictly as her students. We never saw any of the house except the little front room that she called her "office" and that was furnished with a roller-top desk,

oak bookcases, and three or four of the hardest chairs you ever sat in. It looked more like a schoolroom than her own classroom did, over at the high school. While you sat drinking coffee with her, she was still your English teacher or your history teacher or your Latin teacher, whichever she happened to be at the time, and you were supposed to make conversation with her about "Silas Marner" or Tom Paine or Cicero. If it was a good session and you had shown a little enthusiasm, then she would talk to you some about your future and say you ought to begin thinking about college — because she was always going to turn her favorites into professional men. That was how she was going to populate the town with the sort of people she thought it ought to have. She never got but one of us to college, however, and he came back home as a certified druggist instead of the doctor she had wanted him to be. (Our doctors are always men who have moved in here from somewhere else, and our lawyers are people Miss Leonora wouldn't pay any attention to when they were in school.) . . . I used to love to hear Miss Leonora talk, and I went along with her and did pretty well till toward the end of my last year, when I decided that college wasn't for me. I ought to have gone to college, and I had no better reason for deciding against it than any of the others did. It was just that during all the years when Miss Leonora was talking to you about making something of yourself and making Thomasville a more civilized place to live, you were hearing at home and everywhere else about what the Logans had done to the town and how they held themselves above everybody else. I got to feeling ashamed of being known as her protégé.

As I said, Miss Leonora is an intellectual woman. She seldom comes out of the post office without a book under her arm that she has specially ordered or that has come to her from one of the national book clubs she belongs to; and she also reads all the cheapest kind of trash that's to be had at the drugstore. She is just a natural-born reader, and enjoys reading the way other people enjoy eating or sleeping. It used to be that she would bedevil all the preachers we got here, trying to talk theology with them, and worry the life out of the lawyers with talk about Hamilton and Jefferson and her theories about men like Henry Clay and John Marshall. But about the time she quit teaching she gave up all that, too.

Aside from the drugstore trash, nobody knows what she reads

any more, though probably it is the same as always. We sometimes doubt that she knows herself what she reads nowadays. Her reading seems to mean no more to her than her driving about the country does, and one wonders why she goes on with it, and what she gets out of it. Every night, the light in her office burns almost all night, and when she comes out of the post office with a new book, she has the wrappings off before she is halfway across the square and is turning pages and reading away — a mile a minute, so it seems — as she strolls through the square and then heads up High Street toward Logana, which is what the Logans have always called their old house. If someone speaks to her, she pretends not to hear the first time. If it is important, if you want some information about the roads somewhere, you have to call her name a second time. The first sign that she is going to give you her attention comes when she begins moving her lips, hurriedly finishing off a page or a paragraph. Then she slams the book closed, as though she is through with it for all time, and before you can phrase your question she begins asking you how you and all your family are. Nobody can give a warmer greeting and make you feel he is gladder to see you than she can. She stands there beating the new book against her thigh, as though the book were some worthless object that she would just as soon throw away, and when she has asked you about yourself and your family she is ready then to talk about any subject under the sun — anything, I ought to add, except herself. If she makes a reference to the book in her hand, it is only to comment on the binding or the print or the quality of the paper. Or she may say that the price of books has gotten all out of bounds and that the postal rate for books is too high. It's always something that any field hand could understand and is a far cry from the way she used to talk about books when we were in school.

I am reminded of one day six or eight years ago when I saw Miss Leonora stopped on the square by an old colored man named Hominy Atkinson. Or his name may really be Harmony Atkinson. I once asked him which it was, and at first he merely grinned and shrugged his shoulders. But then he said thoughtfully, as though it hadn't ever occurred to him before, "Some does call me the one, I s'pose, and some the other." He is a dirty old ignoramus, and the other Negroes say that in the summertime he has his own private swarm of flies that follows him around. His flies were with him that

day when he stopped Miss Leonora. He was in his wagon, the way you always see him, and he managed to block the old lady's path when she stepped down off the curb and began to cross the street. She had already crossed the street in front of the post office and had cut diagonally across the courthouse lawn. It was the street over there on the other side of the square that she was about to cross. I was standing nearby with a group of men, under the willow oak trees beside the goldfish pool. Twice before Miss Leonora looked up, Hominy Atkinson lifted a knobby hand to shoo the flies away from his head. In the wagon he was seated on a squat split-bottomed chair; and on another chair beside him was his little son Albert. Albert was eight or nine years old at the time, a plump little fellow dressed up in an old-fashioned Buster Brown outfit as tidy and clean as his daddy's rags were dirty.

This Albert is the son of Hominy and the young wife that Hominy took after he was already an old man. The three of them live on a worn-out piece of land three or four miles from town. Albert is a half-grown boy now, and there is nothing very remarkable about him except that they say he still goes to school more regularly than some of the other colored children do. But when he was a little fellow his daddy and mama spoiled and pampered him till, sitting up there in the wagon that day, he had the look of a fat little priss. The fact is, from the time he could sit up in a chair Hominy used never to go anywhere without him — he was so proud of the little pickaninny, and he was so mortally afraid something might happen to him when he was out of his sight. Somebody once asked Hominy why he didn't leave the child home with his mama, and Hominy replied that her hands were kept busy just washing and ironing and sewing for the boy. "It's no easy matter to raise up a clean child," he pronounced. Somebody else asked Hominy one time if he thought it right to take the boy to the square on First Monday, where he would be exposed to some pretty rough talk, or to the Fairgrounds during Fair Week. Hominy replied, "What ain't fittin' for him to hear ain't fittin' for me." And it was true that you seldom saw Hominy on that corner of the square where the Negro men congregated or in the stable yard at the Fairgrounds.

Before Miss Leonora looked up at Hominy that morning, he sat with his old rag of a hat in his lap, smiling down at her. Finally

she slammed her book shut and lifted her eyes. But Hominy didn't try to ask his question until she had satisfied herself that he, his young wife, and Albert there beside him were in good health, and several other of his relatives whose names she knew. Then he asked it.

"What does you need today, Miss Leonora?" he said. "Me, *I* needs a dollar bill."

She replied without hesitating, "I don't need anything I'd pay *you* a dollar for, Hominy." Hominy didn't bat an eye, only sat there gazing down at her while she spoke. "I have a full herd of your kind up at Logana, Hominy, who'll fetch and go for me without any dollar bill. You know that."

She was referring to the Negro families who live in the outbuildings up at her place. People say that some of them live right in the house with her, but when I used to go up there as a boy she kept them all out of sight. There was not even a sound of them on the place. She didn't even let her cook bring in the coffee things, and it gave you the queer feeling that either she was protecting you from them or them from you.

"What do you think you need a dollar for, Hominy?" she asked presently.

"I needs to buy the boy a book," he said.

"What book?" It was summertime, and she knew the boy wouldn't be in school.

"Why, most any book," said Hominy. "I jist can't seem to keep him in reading."

Miss Leonora peered around Hominy at Albert, who sat looking down at his own fat little washed-up hands, as if he might be ashamed of his daddy's begging. Then Miss Leonora glanced down at the book she had got in the mail. "Here, give him this," she said, handing the brand-new book up to that old tatterdemalion. It was as if she agreed with the old ignoramus that it didn't matter what kind of book the boy got so long as it was a book.

And now Albert himself couldn't resist raising his eyes to see the book that was coming his way. He gave Miss Leonora a big smile, showing a mouthful of teeth as white as his starched shirt collar. "Miss Leonora, you oughtn't to do —" he began in an airy little voice.

But his daddy put a stop to it. "Hush your mouth, honey. Miss

Leonora knows what she's doing. Don't worry about that none." He handed the book over to Albert, hardly looking at it himself. Those of us over by the goldfish pool were never able to make out what the book was.

"I certainly thank you, Miss Leonora," Albert piped.

And Hominy said solemnly, "Yes'm, we are much obliged to you."

"Then move this conveyance of yours and let me pass," said Miss Leonora.

Hominy flipped the reins sharply on the rump of his mule and said, "Giddap, Bridesmaid." The old mule flattened its ears back on its head and pulled away with an angry jerk.

But even when the wagon was out of her way Miss Leonora continued to stand there for a minute or so, watching the receding figure of Albert perched on his chair in the wagon bed and bent over his book examining it the way any ordinary child would have examined a new toy. As long as she stood there the old lady kept her eyes on the little black boy. And before she finally set out across the street, we heard her say aloud and almost as if for our benefit, "It may be. . . . It may be. . . . I suppose, yes, it may be."

2

School integration is not yet a burning issue in Thomasville. But some men in town were at first opposed to consolidation of our county high schools until it could be seen what kind of pressures are going to be put on us. In the past eighteen months, however, those men have more or less reversed their position. And they do not deny that their change of mind was influenced by the possibility that Logana might be acquired for the site of the new school. Nor do they pretend that it is because they think Logana such an ideal location. They have agreed to go along with the plan, so they say, because it is the only way of getting rid of the little colony of Negroes who have always lived up there and who would make a serious problem for us if it became a question of zoning the town, in some way, as a last barrier against integration. What they say sounds very logical, and any stranger would be apt to accept the explanation at face value. But the truth of the matter is that there are people here who dislike the memory of the Logans even more than they do the prospect of integration. They are willing to

risk integration in order to see the last Logan dispossessed of his last piece of real estate in Thomasville. With them it is a matter of superstition almost that until this happens Thomasville will not begin to realize its immemorial aspirations to grow and become a citified place.

So that you will better understand this dislike of the Logan name, I will give you a few details of their history here. In the beginning, and for a long while, the Logan family didn't seem to want to spoil Thomasville with their own presence even. General Logan laid out the town in 1816, naming it after a little son of his who died in infancy. But during the first generation the Logan wives stayed mostly over in Middle Tennessee, where they felt there were more people of their own kind. And the men came and went only as their interest in the cotton crops required. In those years, Logana was occupied by a succession of slave-driving overseers, as was also the Logans' other house, which used to stand five miles below here at Logan's Landing.

Now, we might have done without the Logan women and without the county seat, which the women didn't want here, but when the Logans kept the railroad out everybody saw the handwriting on the wall. The General's grandson did that. He was Harwell Logan, for many years chief justice of the state, and a man so powerful that in one breath, so to speak, he could deny the railroad company a right of way through town and demand that it give the name Logan Station to our nearest flag stop. . . . And what was it the chief justice's son did? Why, it was he who prevented the cotton mill and snuff factory from locating here. The snuff factory would have polluted the air. And the cotton mill would have drawn in the riff-raff from all over the county. . . . Along about the turn of the century it looked as though we were going to get the insane asylum for West Tennessee, but one of the Logans was governor of the state; he arranged for it to go to Bolivar instead. Even by then, none of the Logan men were coming back here very much except to hunt birds in the fall. They had already scattered out and were living in the big cities where there was plenty of industry and railroads for them to invest their money in; and they had already sold off most of their land to get the money to invest. But they didn't forget Thomasville. No matter how far up in the world a Logan may ad-

vance, he seems to go on having sweet dreams about Thomasville. Even though he has never actually lived here himself, Thomasville is the one place he doesn't want to have spoiled.

Just after the First World War, there was talk of our getting the new veterans' hospital. During the depression, we heard about a CCC camp. At the beginning of the Second World War, people came down from Washington and took an option on big tracts of land for "Camp Logan." Very mysteriously all of those projects failed to materialize. Like everything else, they would have spoiled the town. But what else is there, I ask you, for a town to have except the things that tend to spoil it? What else is there to give it life? We used to have a boys' academy here, and a girls' institute, which is where Miss Leonora did her first teaching. They were boarding schools, and boys and girls came here from everywhere, and spent their money on the public square. It wasn't much, but it was *something*.

The boys' academy closed down before I was born even, and there isn't a trace left of it. The Thomasville Female Institute burned in 1922, and nothing is left of it, either, except the crumbling shells of the old brick buildings. All we have now that you don't see on the square is the cotton gin and the flour mill and the ice plant. We claim a population of eighteen hundred, counting white and colored, which is about five hundred short of what we claimed in the year 1880. It has been suggested that in the next census we count the trees in Thomasville instead of the people. They outnumber us considerably and they have more influence, too. It was to save the willow oaks on the public square and the giant sycamores along High Street that someone arranged to have the Memphis-Chattanooga Bypass built in 1952 instead of bringing the new highway through town. It was some Logan who arranged that, you may be sure, and no doubt it gladdens his heart to see the new motels that have gone up out there and to know that the old hotel on the square is never overcrowded by a lot of silly tourists.

To my mind, Miss Leonora Logan is a very beautiful woman. But to think she is beautiful nowadays perhaps you would have to have seen her as I did when I was not yet five years old. And perhaps you would have to have seen her under the same circumstances exactly.

I don't remember what the occasion was. We were on a picnic of some kind at Bennett's Wood, and it seems to me that half the town was there. Probably it was the Fourth of July, though I don't remember any flags or speeches. A band was playing in the bandstand, and as I walked along between my mother and father I noticed that the trunks of the walnut trees had been freshly white-washed. The bare earth at the roots of the trees was still dappled with the droppings from the lime buckets. My father pointed out a row of beehives on the far edge of the grove and said he hoped to God nobody would stir the bees up today as some bad boys had once done when there was an outing at Bennett's Wood. My father smiled at Mother when he said this, and my guess is that he had been amongst the boys who did it. My mother smiled, too, and we continued our walk.

It was just before dusk. My impression is that the actual picnicking and the main events of the day were already over. I was holding my mother's hand as we came out from under the trees and into the clearing where Bennett's Pond is. Several groups were out on the pond in rowboats, drifting about among the lily pads. One boat had just drawn up to the grassy bank on the side where we were. My mother leaned toward my father and said in a quiet voice, "Look at Miss Leonora Logan. Isn't she beautiful!"

She was dressed all in white. She had stood up in the boat the moment it touched shore, and it seemed to me that she had risen out of the water itself and were about to step from one of the lily pads onto the bank. I was aware of her being taller than most women whose beauty I had heard admired, and I knew that she was already spoken of as an old maid — that she was older than my own mother even; but when she placed the pointed toe of her white shoe on the green sod beside the pond, it was as if that lovely white point had pierced my soul and awakened me to a beauty I had not dreamed of. Her every movement was all lightness and grace, and her head of yellow hair dazzled.

The last rays of the sun were at that moment coming directly toward me across the pond, and presently I had to turn my face away from its glare. But I had the feeling that it was Miss Leonora's eyes and the burning beauty of her countenance that had suddenly blinded me, and when my mother asked me fretfully what was the matter and why I hung back so, I was ashamed. I imagined that

Mother could read the thoughts in my head. I imagined also that my mother, who was a plain woman and who as the wife of the hotel-keeper made no pretension to elegance — I imagined that she was now jealous of my admiration for Miss Leonora. With my face still averted, I silently reproached her for having herself suggested the thoughts to me by her remark to my father. I was very angry, and my anger and shame must have brought a deep blush to my whole face and neck. I felt my mother's two fingers thrust under the collar of my middy, and then I was soothed by her sympathetic voice saying, "Why, child, you're feverish. We'd better get you home."

I must have had many a glimpse of Miss Leonora when I was a small boy playing on the hotel porch. But the next profound impression she made on me was when I was nine years old. One of the boarding students at the Institute had been stealing the other girls' things. It fell to Miss Leonora to apprehend the thief, who proved to be none other than a member of the Logan clan itself — a sad-faced, unattractive girl, according to all reports, but from a very rich branch of the family. She had been sent back to Thomasville to school all the way from Omaha, Nebraska.

Several hours after Miss Leonora had obtained unmistakable evidence of the girl's guilt and had told her she was to be sent home, it was discovered that the girl had disappeared. Word got out in the town that they were dragging the moat around the old windmill on the Institute grounds for the girl's body. Soon a crowd of townspeople gathered on the lawn before the Institute, near to where the windmill stood. This windmill was no longer used to pump the school's water — the school had town water by then — and there was not even a shaft or any vanes in evidence. But the old brick tower had been left standing. With its moat of stagnant, mossy water around it, it was thought to be picturesque.

The crowd assembled on the lawn some fifty or sixty feet away from the tower, and from there we watched the two Negro men at their work in the moat. The moat was fed by a sluggish wet-weather spring. It was about twenty feet wide and was estimated to be from ten to fifteen feet deep. And so the two men had had to bring in a boat to do their work from. On the very edge of the moat stood Miss Leonora, alongside Dr. Perkins, the chancellor of the Institute,

and with them were several other teachers in their dark-blue uniforms. They all kept staring up at the windows of the old brick residence hall, as if to make sure that none of the girls were peering out at the distressing scene.

Presently we heard one of the Negro men say something to the other and heard the other mumble something in reply. We couldn't make out what they said, but we knew they had found the girl's body. In a matter of two or three minutes they were hauling it up, and all of the women teachers except Miss Leonora buried their faces in their hands. From where we were, the slimy object was hardly recognizable as anything human, but despite this, or because of it, the crowd sent up a chorus of gasps and groans.

Hearing our chorus, Miss Leonora whirled about. She glared at us across the stretch of lawn for a moment, and then she came striding toward us, waving both hands in the air and ordering us to leave. "Go away! Go away!" she called out. "What business have you coming here with your wailing and moaning? A lot you care about that dead girl!" As she drew nearer, I could see her glancing at the ground now and then as if looking for a stick to drive us away with. "Go away!" she cried. "Take your curious eyes away. What right have you to be curious about *our* dead?"

A general retreat began, down the lawn and through the open gateway in the spiked iron fence. I hurried along with the others, but I kept looking back at Miss Leonora, who now stood on the brow of the terraced lawn, watching the retreat with a proud, bemused expression, seeming for the moment to have forgotten the dead young woman in the moat.

How handsome she was standing there, with her high color and her thick yellow hair that seemed about to come loose on her head and fall down on the shoulders of her blue shirtwaist.

Beyond her I had glimpses of the two Negro men lifting the dead body out of the water. They moved slowly and cautiously, but after they had got the girl into the boat and were trying to move her out of the boat onto the lawn, I saw the girl's head fall back. Her wet hair hung down like Spanish moss beneath her, and when the winter sunlight struck it, all at once it looked as green as seaweed. It was very beautiful, and yet, of course, I didn't feel right in thinking it was. It is something I have never been able to forget.

One day when we were in high school, a girl in the class asked

Miss Leonora to tell us about “the Institute girl who did away with herself” — because Miss Leonora did sometimes tell us about the old days at the Institute. She stood looking out the classroom window, and seemed to be going over the incident in her mind and trying to decide whether or not it was something we ought to know more about. Finally she said, “No, we’ll go on with the lesson now.”

But the class, having observed her moment of indecision, began to beg. “Please tell us, Miss Leonora. Please.” I don’t know how many of the others had been in the crowd that day when they pulled the girl out of the moat. I was not the only one, I’m sure. I think that everybody knew most of the details and only wanted to see if she would refer to the way it ended with her driving the crowd away. But Miss Leonora wouldn’t have cared at all, even if she had thought that was our motive. She would have given us her version if she had wanted to.

“Open your books,” she said.

But still we persisted, and I was bold enough to ask, “Why not?”

“I’ll just tell you why not,” she said, suddenly blazing out at me. “Because there is nothing instructive in the story for you.”

After that day, I realized, as never before, that though she often seemed to wander from the subject in class, it was never really so. She was eternally instructing us. If only once she had let up on the instruction, we might have learned something — or I might have. I used to watch her for a sign — any sign — of her caring about what we thought of her, or of her *not* caring about her mission amongst us, if that’s what it was. More and more it came to seem incredible to me that she was the same woman I had gone feverish over at Bennett’s Wood that time, which was probably before Miss Leonora had perceived her mission. And yet I have the feeling she was the same woman still. Looking back on those high-school days, I know that all along she was watching me and others like me for some kind of sign from us — any sign — that would make us seem worthy of knowing what we wanted to know about her.

I suppose that what we wanted to know, beyond any doubt, was that the old lady had suffered for being just what she was — for being born with her cold, rigid, intellectual nature, and for being born to represent something that had never taken root in Thomasville and that would surely die with her. But not knowing that that was what we wanted to know, we looked for other, smaller

things. She didn't, for instance, have lunch in the lunchroom with the other teachers, and she didn't go home for lunch. She had a Negro woman bring her lunch to her on a tray all the way from Logana, on the other side of town. Generally she ate alone in her classroom. Sometimes we made excuses to go back to the room during lunch hour, and when we came out we pretended to the others that we had had a great revelation — that we had caught Miss Leonora Logan eating peas with her knife or sopping her plate with a biscuit. We never caught her doing anything so improper, of course, but it gave us a wonderful pleasure to imagine it.

It was while I was in high school that Miss Leonora inherited Logana. She had already been living in the house most of her life — all of it except for the years when she taught and lived at the Institute — but the house had really belonged to her grandfather's brother in St. Louis. The morning we heard she had inherited the place, we thought surely she would be in high spirits about her good fortune, and before she came into the room that morning one of the girls said she was going to ask her how it felt to be an heiress. It was a question that never got asked, however, because when our teacher finally appeared before us she was dressed in black. She had inherited the house where she had lived most of her life as a poor relation, but she was also in mourning for the dead great-uncle away off in St. Louis. For us it was impossible to detect either joy over the one event or grief over the other. Perhaps she felt neither, or perhaps she had to hide her feelings because she felt that it was really the great-uncle's death in St. Louis she had inherited and the house in Thomasville she had lost. Our lessons went on that day as though nothing at all had happened.

But before I ever started going to the high school, and before Miss Leonora went there to teach, I had seen her on yet another memorable occasion up at the Institute — the most memorable and dramatic of all, because it was the night that the place burned down. I remember the events of that night very clearly. It was a February night in 1922. The temperature was in the low twenties, and no doubt they had thrown open the drafts in every one of the coal-burning heaters up at the Institute.

The fire broke out in the refectory and spread very rapidly to the residence hall and the classrooms building. Like any big fire, it

quickly drew the whole town to the scene. Before most of us got up there it was already out of hand. All over town the sky looked like Judgment Day. On the way to the fire, we could hear the floors of the old buildings caving in, one after the other; and so from the beginning there was not much anybody could do. The town water-works couldn't get enough pressure up there to be of any real use, and after that girl drowned herself they had filled in the old moat around the windmill.

The first thing that happened after I got in sight of the place was that the gingerbread porches, which were already on fire, began to fall away from the buildings. There were porches on the second and third floors of the residence hall, and suddenly they fell away like flaming ladders that somebody had given a kick to. The banisters and posts and rafters fell out into the evergreen shrubbery, and pretty soon the smell of burning hemlock and cedar filled the air. . . . The teachers had got all the girls out safely, and the first men to arrive even saved some of the furniture and the books, but beyond that there was nothing to be done except to stand and watch the flames devour the innards of the buildings. This was very fascinating to everybody, and the crowd shifted from one point to another, always trying to get a better view and to see into which room or down which corridor the flames would move next.

Miss Leonora was as fascinated as any of the rest of us, and it was this about her that impressed me that night. It was not till later that I heard about how she behaved during the first phase of the fire. She had dashed about from building to building screaming orders to everyone, even to the fire brigade when it arrived. She would not believe it when the firemen told her that the water pressure could not be increased. She threw a bucket of water in one man's face when he refused to take that bucket and climb up to a second-story porch with it.

I didn't see any of that. When I arrived, Miss Leonora was already resigned to the total loss that was inevitable. On a little knob of earth on the north side of the lawn, which people used to call the Indian Mound, she had taken her position all alone and isolated from the general crowd. The other teachers had been sent off with the Institute girls to the hotel, where my mother was waiting to receive them. But wrapped in a black fur cape — it was bearskin, I think, and must have been a hand-me-down from some relative —

Miss Leonora was seated on one of the iron benches that were grouped over there on the mound. Her only companions were two iron deer that stood nearby, one with its head lowered as if grazing, the other with its iron antlers lifted and its blank iron eyes fixed on the burning buildings.

She sat there very erect, looking straight ahead. It was hard to tell whether she was watching the flames or watching the people watch the flames. Perhaps she was fascinated equally by both. It was all over for her. She knew that practically nothing was going to be saved, but still she wanted to see how it would go. Now and then a shaft of flame would shoot up into the overcast sky, lighting up the mixture of cloud and smoke above us, and also lighting up the figure of Miss Leonora over on the mound. Some of the women whispered amongst themselves, "Poor Miss Leonora! The school was her life." But if you caught a glimpse of her in one of those moments when the brightest light was on her, it wasn't self-pity or despair you saw written on her face. You saw her awareness of what was going on around her, and a kind of curiosity about it all that seemed almost inhuman and that even a child was bound to resent somewhat. She looked dead herself, but at the same time very much alive to what was going on around her. And I think it is some such attitude as that that has sustained her through all the dull, disappointing years since.

3

When Miss Leonora's house was condemned two weeks ago, *somebody* had to break the news to her. They couldn't just send the clerk up there with the notice, or, worse still, let her read it in the newspaper. The old lady had to be warned of how matters had gone. . . . We left the courthouse at four o'clock that afternoon, and set out for the Logan place on foot. None of us wanted to go, but who else would go if we didn't? That was how Judge Potter had put it to us. I suppose we elected to go on foot merely because it would take longer to get up there that way.

It was while we walked along under the sycamores on High Street that I let the others talk me into doing the job alone. They said that I had, after all, been her very favorite — by which they meant only that I was her first favorite — and that if we went in a group she might take it as a sign of cowardice, might even tell us it was

that to our faces. It was a funny business, and we laughed about it a little amongst ourselves, though not much. Finally I agreed that the other three men should wait behind the sumac and elderberry down in the Lane, while I went up to see Miss Leonora alone.

Once this was settled, the other three men turned to reminiscing about their experiences with Miss Leonora when they were in high school. But I couldn't concentrate on what they said. It may have been because I knew their stories so well. Or maybe it wasn't that. At any rate, when we had walked two blocks up High Street I realized that I was out of cigarettes, and I told the others to wait a minute while I stepped into the filling station, on the corner there, to buy a package. When I paid for the cigarettes, Buck Wallace, who operates the station, looked at me and said, "Well, how did it go? Do we condemn?"

I nodded and said, "We're on the way up there to tell her, Buck."

"I guessed you were," he said. He glanced out the window at the others, and I looked out at them, too. For a second it seemed that I was seeing them through Buck Wallace's eyes — them and myself. And the next second it seemed, for some reason, that I was seeing them through Miss Leonora's eyes — them and myself. We all had on our business suits, our lightweight topcoats, our gray fedoras; we were the innkeeper, the druggist, a bank clerk, and the rewrite man from the weekly paper. Our ages ranged from thirty to fifty — with me at the top — but we were every one of us decked out to look like the same kind of thing. We might have just that minute walked out of the Friday-noon meeting of the Exchange Club. In Buck Wallace's eyes, however, we were certainly not the cream of the Exchange Club crop — *not* the men who were going to get Thomasville its due. And in Miss Leonora's eyes we were a cut above the Exchange Club's ringleaders, though not enough above them to matter very much. To both her and Buck we were merely the go-betweens. It just happened that we were the last people left in town that the old lady would speak to, and so now we — or, rather, I was going up to Logana and tell her she would have to accept the town's terms of unconditional surrender.

"You may be too late," Buck added as I was turning away. I looked back at him with lifted eyebrows. "She was in here a while ago," he went on to report, "getting her car gassed up. She said how she was about to take off on one of her trips. She said she might

wait till she heard from the courthouse this afternoon and again she might not. . . . She was got up kind of peculiar.”

When I rejoined the other men outside, I didn’t tell them what Buck had said. Suddenly I mistrusted them, and I didn’t trust myself. Or rather I knew I *could* trust myself to let *them* have their way if they thought Miss Leonora was about to leave town. I was pretty sure she wouldn’t leave without hearing from us, and I was pretty sure they would want to head us back to the courthouse immediately and send official word up there before she could get away. It would have been the wise thing to do, certainly, but I didn’t let it happen.

In the filling station Buck Wallace had said to me that she was “got up kind of peculiar,” and that meant, to my understanding, that Miss Leonora was dressed in one of two ways. Neither was a way that I had ever seen her dressed, and I wanted to see for myself. It meant either that she was got up in a lot of outmoded finery or she was wearing her dungarees! Because that is how, for ten years now, the old lady has been turning up at the tourist homes where she stops, and that is how, if you wanted to recognize her on the road, you would have to watch out for her. Either she would be in her finery — with the fox fur piece, and the diamond earrings, and the high-crowned velvet hat, and the kind of lace choker that even old ladies don’t generally go in for any more and that Miss Leonora has never been seen to wear in Thomasville except by a very few — or she would be in her dungarees! The dungarees are the hardest to imagine, of course. With them she wears a home-knit, knee-length cardigan sweater. And for headgear she pulls on a big poke bonnet she has resurrected from somewhere, or sometimes she stuffs her long hair up under a man’s hunting cap or an old broad-brimmed straw hat. A queer sight she must present riding about the countryside these autumn nights; and if she rides with the top to her convertible put back, as I’ve heard of her doing in the dead of winter even, why, it’s enough to scare any children who may see her, and some grown people, too. . . . Here in Thomasville, only Buck Wallace and a few others have seen her so garbed, and they only rarely, only sometimes when she was setting out on a trip. They say she looks like some inmate who has broken out of the asylum over at Bolivar.

But that’s how she turns up at the tourist homes. If she is with

the two old maids at Boxwood Manor or Maple Lawn, she affects the choker and the diamond earrings. She sits down in their parlor and removes the high-crowned velvet, and she talks about how the traditions and institutions of our country have been corrupted and says that soon not one stone will be left upon another. And, still using such terms and phrases, she will at last get round to telling them the story of her life and the history of the Logan family in Thomasville. She tells it all in the third person, pretending it is some friend of hers she has in mind, and the family of that friend. But the old maids know right along that it is herself she is speaking of, and they say she seems to know they know it and seems not to care. . . . And if she is with the farm couple at Oak Crest, then she's in her dungarees. She at once sets about helping with the chores, if they will let her. She talks religion to them and says there is no religion left amongst the people in the towns, says that they have forsaken the fountain of living waters and hewed them out broken cisterns that can hold no water — something like that. And finally she gets round to telling *them* her story, again pretending that it is some friend of hers she is speaking of, and again with her listeners knowing it is herself. The farm couple won't like seeing an old woman wearing dungarees, but they will catch the spirit of her getup, and they understand what it means. For they have known other old women there in the country who, thrown entirely on their own, living alone and in desperate circumstances, have gotten so they dress in some such outrageous way. And the two old maids probably still have some eye for fashion and they find Miss Leonora pretty ridiculous. But they remember other old ladies who did once dress like that, and it seems somehow credible that there might still be one somewhere.

When Miss Leonora is at home in Thomasville, it is hard to believe she ever dresses herself up so. Here we are used to seeing her always in the most schoolteacherish, ready-made-looking clothes. After the Institute burned, she changed from the uniform that the Institute teachers wore to what amounts to a uniform for our high-school teachers — the drab kind of street dresses that can be got only through the mail-order catalogues. Right up till two weeks ago, that's how we were still seeing the old lady dressed. It was hard to realize that in her old age she had had a change of heart

and was wishing that either she had played the role of the spinster great lady the way it is usually played or that she had married some dirt farmer and spent her life working alongside him in the fields.

I even used to think that perhaps Miss Leonora didn't really want to go off masquerading around the country — that it was a kind of madness and meant something that would be much more difficult to explain, and that all the time she was at home she was dreading her next seizure. Recently, however, I've come to realize that that wasn't the case. For years her only satisfaction in life has been her periodic escapes into a reality that is scattered in bits and pieces along the highways and back roads of the country she travels. And what I hope above all else is that Miss Leonora *is* stopping today at Oak Crest or Boxwood Manor and *does* have on her dungarees or her lace choker.

But now I must tell you what makes me doubt that she *is*, after all, staying at one of those tourist homes she likes, and what makes me afraid that we may never see her here again.

I left the other men down at the corner of the Lane and went up the dirt driveway to Logana alone. Her car was parked at the foot of the porch steps, and so there was no question about her being there. I saw her first through one of the sidelights at the front door and wasn't sure it was she. Then she opened the door, saying, "Dear boy, come in." I laughed, it was so unlike her to call me that. That was not her line at all. She laughed, too, but it was a kind of laugh that was supposed to put me at my ease rather than to criticize or commend me, which would have been very much more in her line. . . . I saw at a glance that this wasn't the Miss Leonora I had known, and wasn't one that I had heard about from her tourist-home friends, either.

She had done an awful thing to her hair. Her splendid white mane, with its faded yellow streaks and its look of being kept up on her head only by the two tortoise-shell combs at the back, was no more. She had cut it off, thinned it, and set it in little waves close to her head, and, worse still, she must have washed it in a solution of indigo bluing. She had powdered the shine off her nose, seemed almost to have powdered its sharpness and longness away. She may have applied a little rouge and lipstick, though hardly enough to be noticeable, only enough to make you realize it wasn't the natural

coloring of an old lady and enough to make you *think* how old she was. And the dress she had on was exactly right with the hair and the face, though at first I couldn't tell why.

As I walked beside her from the center hall into her "office," her skirt made an unpleasant swishing sound that seemed out of place in Miss Leonora's house and that made me observe more closely what the dress was really like. It was of a dark silk stuff, very stiff, with a sort of middy-blouse collar, and sleeves that stopped a couple of inches above the wrists, and a little piece of belt in back, fastened on with two big buttons — very stylish, I think. For a minute I couldn't remember where it was I had seen this very woman before. Then it came to me. All that was lacking was a pair of pixie glasses with rhinestone rims, and a half dozen bracelets on her wrists. She was one of those old women who come out here from Memphis looking for antiques and country hams and who tell you how delighted they are to find a Southern town that is truly unchanged.

Even so, I half expected Miss Leonora to begin by asking me about my family and then about what kind of summer I had had. "Now, I know you have had a fine summer — all summers are fine to a boy your age," she would say. "So don't tell me what you have been doing. Tell me what you have been *thinking*, what you have been *reading*." It was the room that made me imagine she would still go on that way. Because the room was the same as it used to be. Even the same coffee cups and blue china coffeepot were set out on the little octagonal oak table, beside the plate of butter cookies. And for a moment I had the same guilty feeling I used always to have; because, of course, I hadn't been reading anything and hadn't been thinking anything she would want to hear about.

What she actually said was much kinder and was what anybody might have said under the circumstances. "I've felt so bad about your having to come here like this. I knew they would put it off on you. Even you must have dreaded coming, and you must hate me for putting you in such a position."

"Why, no. I wanted to come, Miss Leonora," I lied. "And I hope you have understood that I had no part in the proceedings." It was what, for months, I had known I would say, and it came out very easily.

"I do understand that," she said. "And we don't even need to talk about any of it."

But I said, "The county court has granted the writ condemning your property. They will send a notice up to you tomorrow morning. You ought to have had a lawyer represent you, and you ought to have come yourself."

I had said what I had promised Judge Potter I would say; she had her warning. And now I was on my own. She motioned me to sit down in a chair near the table where the coffee things were. When she poured out the coffee into our two cups, it was steaming hot. It smelled the way it used to smell in that room on winter afternoons, as fresh as if it were still brewing on the stove. I knew she hadn't made it herself, but, as in the old days, too, the Negro woman who had made it didn't appear or make a sound in the kitchen. You wouldn't have thought there was one of them on the place. There didn't seem to be another soul in the house but just herself and me. But *I* knew that the house was full of them, really. And there was still the feeling that either she was protecting me from them or them from me. I experienced the old uneasiness in addition to something new. And as for Miss Leonora, she seemed to sense from the start that the other three men were waiting down in the Lane — the three who had been even less willing than I to come, and who were that much nearer to the rest of the town in their feelings. Several times she referred to them, giving a little nod of her head in the direction of the very spot where I had left them waiting.

"When I think of the old days, the days when I used to have you up here — you and the others, too — I realize I was too hard on you. I asked too much of my pupils. I know that now."

It was nothing like the things the real Miss Leonora used to say. It was something anybody might have said.

And a little later: "I was unrealistic. I tried to be to you children what I thought you needed to have somebody be. That's a mistake, always. One has to try to be with people what they want one to be. Each of you tried to be that for me, to an admirable degree. Tim Hadley tried hardest — he went to college — but he didn't have your natural endowments." Then she took pains to say something good and something forgiving about each of the four. And, unless I imagined it, for each of those that hadn't come up with me

she gave another nod in the direction of the elderberry and the sumac thicket down at the corner.

"We were a dumb bunch, all along the line," I said, not meaning it — or not meaning it about myself.

"Nonsense. You were all fine boys, and *you* were my brightest hope," she said, with an empty cheerfulness.

"But you can't make a silk purse out of —" I began.

"Nonsense," she said again. "It was neither you nor I that failed." But she didn't care enough to make any further denial or explanation. She set her cup down on the table and rose from her chair. "It's been like old times, hasn't it," she said with a vague smile.

I looked away from her and sat gazing about the office, still holding my empty cup in my hand. It hadn't been like old times at all, of course. The room and the silence of the house were the same, but Miss Leonora was already gone, and without her the house was nothing but a heap of junk. I thought to myself that the best thing that could happen would be for them to begin moving out the furniture and moving out the Negroes and tearing the place down as soon as possible. Suddenly, I spied her black leather travelling bag over beside the doorway, and she must have seen my eyes light upon it. "I'm about to get off on a little trip," she said.

I set my cup down on the table and looked up at her. I could see she was expecting me to protest. "Will it be long?" I asked, not protesting.

"I don't know, dear boy. You know how I am."

I glanced at the travelling bag again, and this time I noticed her new cloth coat lying on the straight chair beside the bag. I got up and went over and picked up the coat and held it for her.

On the way out to the car, I kept reminding myself that this was really Miss Leonora Logan and that she was going away before receiving any official notice of the jury's verdict. Finally, when we were standing beside her car and she was waiting for me to open the door and waiting for me to put the bag, which I was carrying, inside the car, I looked squarely into her eyes. And there is no denying it; the eyes were still the same as always, not just their hazel color but their expression, their look of awareness — awareness of you, the individual before her, a very flattering awareness until presently you realized it was merely of you as an individual in her scheme of things for Thomasville. She was still looking at

me as though I were one of the village children that she would like so much to make something of. I opened the car door. I tossed the bag into the space behind the driver's seat. I even made sure I did the thing to her satisfaction by putting one hand out to her elbow as she slipped stiffly in under the steering wheel.

Neither of us made any pretense of saying goodbye. I stood there and watched the car as it bumped along down the dirt driveway, raising a little cloud of dust in the autumn air. The last I saw of her was a glimpse of her bluinged head through the rear window of her convertible. When she turned out into the Lane and headed away from town toward the bypass, I knew that the other three men would be watching. But they wouldn't be able to see how she was got up, and I knew they would hardly believe me when I told them.

I have told nearly everybody in town about it, and I think nobody really believes me. I have almost come to doubt it myself. And, anyway, I like to think that in her travelling bag she had the lace-choker outfit that she could change into along the way, and the dungarees, too; and that she is stopping at her usual kind of place today and is talking to the proprietors about Thomasville. Otherwise, there is no use in anyone's keeping an eye out for her. She will look too much like a thousand others, and no doubt will be driving on the highway the way everybody else does, letting other people pass her, dimming her lights for everyone. Maybe she even drives in the daytime, and maybe when she stops for the night it is at a big, modern motel with air-conditioning and television in every room. The postcards she sends us indicate nothing about how she is dressed, of course, or about where and in what kind of places she is stopping. She says only that she is in good health, that it is wonderful weather for driving about the country, and that the roads have been improved everywhere. She says nothing about when we can expect her to come home.

THE PERILS OF FLIGHT

BY ELLINGTON WHITE

*H*ERE IT WAS Monday again, three o'clock — doves mooning in the heat, squirrels scuttling along the drainpipes, the slumberous drone of bees attacking the peach orchard. Midway between the house and the river stood a locust tree; beyond that a fish shed going to pieces, all splinters and nails and the bow of a boat piercing the shingled roof. A falling tide drew the river seaward, but drew it at the river's own unhurried pace, moving along as slick and heavy as oil, too far inland to care much about tides: when the river fell it fell only a few feet, displaying two shelves of mud, perhaps fifty yards apart, onto which logs had drifted, hung, and rotted. Carp wallowed in the warm shallows; a cow plodded shoreward across the marshy flats. A heron rose and floated over the river, a long blue gliding flight which Effie Miles, standing before her bedroom window, followed until a yawn momentarily closed her eyes and she lost the heron in a dazzling haze of water and summer sky. But never mind — heron and river would be there again tomorrow; so would the wallowing carp and sun bearing down out of a cloudless sky; so would she, who had lived among these things all her life and at the edge of sixty-five was not likely to leave them overnight.

But here my mother interrupts: "Effie was always the quiet sister."

And Father replies, "Quiet, hell! She was nuts."

Father remembers too well when Effie used to visit us in Philadelphia, bringing slabs of country ham, apples, and peaches, and

vegetables from the garden because she assumed that these things were inaccessible in Philadelphia, an assumption which Father naturally objected to and so made himself scarce while Effie, seated in the living room after dinner, told us about the home place, as she was the sister who had stayed there to look after Grandmother after Grandfather died — Effie the family martyr, short, plump, near-sighted old maid. How we pitied her and laughed when she told us about the pool of quicksilver in the river woods. "I think you mean quicksand, Effie." Quicksand, yes, that was what she meant. A cow had broken down a fence and wandered into the stuff. "Poor thing, it cried all one night. Mother got terribly upset." "And how is Mother, Effie?" "The same. I try to make her comfortable. Brother Samuel is having central heat installed. You know he has taken over the mortgage and plans to come back when he retires." Yes, we knew that. "And what about you, Effie? Will you stay on?" "If Samuel wants me I will." Of course Samuel wanted her! The real question was whether she wanted Samuel. Her answer: "We got on very well as children."

"A nutty woman," says Father, who also remembers Samuel.

Grandmother Miles died at the age of eighty-two, and a year later, true to his word, Samuel returned to the Miles Place Overlooking the Seven Mile Reach, so named because here the river yielded to a perverse seven-mile whim and doubled back on itself, as though, having fallen under the ocean's influence, it regretted its course and had swung around sluggishly in search of another. The place belonged to Samuel by then. At first Mother thought how lovely it was, this picture of brother and sister again united in the old homestead, there to live out the golden years among orchards and barns and the sweet noise of rain crossing the river on idle summer afternoons. Father, however, being more realistic, said that Mother was too sentimental and that her picture was lovely only because she had conveniently removed from it all the differences between the two people involved. Effie was like Grandfather Miles, who had failed as a farmer and ended his days selling Rawleigh products: she was mild and submissive. And Samuel, an Atlanta lawyer and industrious dabbler in real estate, a petrified bachelor, had learned to look upon these traits, especially the latter, as signs of weakness, as something one took advantage of, like poor arithmetic. Perhaps too they reminded him of his father. In any case, if

they ever dawned, the golden days soon passed over, and into their place moved the winter of Samuel's discontent. Shivering and numb, Effie withdrew into a corner, there to write us lengthy letters about her feeble-minded inadequacies and poor Samuel who had to put up with them. Poor Samuel: People sent him messages by Effie and so anxious was she to remember them that she forgot who sent them. Poor Samuel: accustomed to efficiency, he now had someone on his hands who couldn't find the monthly phone bill an hour after it arrived. Poor Samuel: he soon gave up relying on her for anything and went days without speaking because what was the use of speaking to someone who when she spoke, seldom though it was, when the silence had grown too heavy to bear, said quicksilver when she meant quicksand and cows when she meant steers, whereupon, looking away, Samuel would groan with such disgust that she wanted to cut out her tongue. "Didn't Father own a set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*?" Effie asked Mother in one of her letters. "I was trying to find them the other day. There is something I want to ask Samuel, but first I have to make sure I'm asking him about the right thing. Otherwise he won't answer me." Another time she wrote that after lengthy deliberation Samuel had decided that "I need someone on the place to help me. Of course he's right. I'm no longer young, you know." This letter was dated January 6, 1952, and by the middle of February the woman had arrived. Her name was Sara Stramp. "A wonderfully stout, healthy person," according to Effie, "who tells me she has been widowed twice. Imagine! She'll do the housework and get breakfast. I'll fix the other meals." Before long, however, it became apparent that Effie had nothing more to do with the kitchen, that she had turned it over to Mrs. Stramp, whose meals pleased Samuel more than her own — Effie said Mrs. Stramp was, after all, used to cooking for men — and still wanting to be helpful, now that the kitchen was gone, Effie picked up Mrs. Stramp's mop, made Mrs. Stramp's bed, and went on pretending to us that nothing unusual had really happened. "It's marvelous," she wrote, "how Mrs. Stramp has managed to take hold in the few short weeks she has been here." But more marvelous still, as far as we were concerned, was another letter we received from her after Samuel had asked for certain closet keys, keys which Effie had inherited from her mother, but which Samuel felt would be safer with Mrs. Stramp. "I had never realized

before," she said, "how nice it is to be without responsibilities." We chose to believe she was telling the truth and hoped with all our hearts that Mrs. Stramp would soon grow to like her.

With nothing to do, deprived of her kitchen, keyless and stifling a yawn, Effie stood before the bedroom window one afternoon buried at the fiery center of July and watched the swallows schooling over the barn like scraps of burned paper blown out of a chimney. Except for Mrs. Stramp, whose room was farther down the hall, and who was napping, the house was empty. More squirrels ran down the gutter. Fortunate for them Samuel was away or he would shoot them. Samuel hated squirrels because they robbed the pecan tree and built nests under the eaves. He loved to step out in the morning and blast away. Sunlight and gunshots and warm piles of furry bodies: those were Effie's immediate recollections, and she shivered. An electric fan hummed; so, she noticed, did the air hum over the barn, and looking that way she saw why: the swallows had been joined by a solitary lump of silver flashing down the sky, an airplane crackling like fire. Effie watched it roll over the orchard and then disappear behind the house. "How lovely," she said, crossing the room for a final glimpse through the opposite window, but before she could get there, having stupidly paused midway to debate with herself whether or not to wake Mrs. Stramp, which she decided finally not to do, all signs of the lovely thing had vanished. Oh well, there was nothing unusual about airplanes these days, she thought, and returned to her customary view of the river. It saddened her to think that Samuel was going to have the old fish shed torn down. He was afraid of being sued if it fell on someone, as if that was likely to happen. But perhaps he was right. She didn't know. All things seemed to outlive their usefulness. But the fish shed . . . She tried to imagine the view without it. Very flat, she was afraid, and calculated — all that green green grass falling without a break into the river. Samuel had said nothing so far about the broken-down wharf in front of the shed, but having been warped lopsided by too many winters, it would have to go soon, she felt, and with it the double row of old pilings, each crowned by a thick bushy growth, which still managed to keep their rotten heads a foot or so above the muddy water. Their heads and the head — she looked closer — the head of another. A bird swooped and the thing moved.

Effie cried, "Mrs. Stramp, Mrs. Stramp come here! Hurry!"

Squeaking bed springs, a thump, feet padding down the hall, and Mrs. Stramp was there, fixing a pair of glasses on her large nose — a short shapeless woman standing on thick legs.

"There!" Effie said, pointing towards the river.

Mrs. Stramp peered out of the window.

"I don't see anything."

"Look!"

Again the bird dove, followed by a heavy splash, and stunned, Effie and Mrs. Stramp, who jumped back, watched a pair of white arms emerge from the spray — whiter, they seemed, than the wings of the diving bird. Slapping first the water, then the air, they were bringing a man to shore, bringing him slowly, none too expertly, but bringing him ashore all the same. Effie grabbed Mrs. Stramp's arm. It was a grip which said we are two old ladies in a house by ourselves and here comes a man swimming towards us: what are we going to do?

Among waves of his own making, thrashing and churning, a man washed ashore. He plodded across the muddy flats, still striking at the air, and fell headlong into the fish shed.

"What do you suppose he wants in there?" Effie asked, her voice trembling as thoughts of Samuel entered her mind. "We had better telephone Samuel," she said.

"And tell him a man's in the fish shed? Fat chance he'd believe that."

"He's got to believe it."

"Not him."

"No?"

"No."

"But we can't just stand here."

"I don't know why not."

Effie said, "But the man may be hurt."

"He didn't look hurt to me."

"What can we tell from here."

"All right, then, we'll go down *there*."

"Alone?"

"It was your idea."

Was it? Effie couldn't seem to remember. She said, "Shouldn't we take the first aid kit?"

"Suit yourself," Mrs. Stramp replied.

Some years later, when Mrs. Stramp was dead and Samuel occupied the same bed in which his mother had died, and had the same nurse — in 1957, to be exact, when Effie, on her way north to visit Buddy Stramp, her dear friend's only son, stopped over in Philadelphia to see us, she said that neither she nor Mrs. Stramp, "Sara," found anything to talk about after leaving the house and starting down the hill. "Sara looked calm, but then she always did. I kept thinking there ought to be a storm approaching, some of those monstrous black clouds such as you see in the summer, all swollen with thunder and spouting lightning." But no storm was in sight. A few of Samuel's cows gazed at them from the woods and mild little butterflies fluttered around their ankles.

When they reached the shed, they heard a moan, followed in the same breath by "Survival kit, hell!" and a little package sailed through one of the holes in the wall and dropped at their feet. A boy sat in the shed among rotten fish nets, in which his feet had somehow become entangled, like a fish covered with mud and green slime that had flopped ashore. Wet black hair hung over a face as incapable of inflicting harm as the butterflies through which they had walked to reach him.

"You there," Mrs. Stramp said. "Hello."

The boy looked up, blinking and dazed. He looked first behind him, then at the vacant door.

"Over here," Mrs. Stramp said, rapping sharply over the hole that once upon a time had been a window.

The boy saw her and words rushed out of his mouth. "Stay away from that river, lady! Snakes, birds . . . Where am I anyway?"

"Mr. Samuel Miles's place," said Mrs. Stramp, to which, Effie, leaning over her shoulder, added, "He's a lawyer. Who're you?"

The boy shook his head.

"Are you in pain?"

"Pain," he repeated.

"Yes, pain." And Effie held up the first aid kit so that he could see it.

He turned away.

"I wrapped myself around a piling out there and looked a snake in the eye bigger around than your head."

"Why don't you come out if you're not hurt," Mrs. Stramp said. "We want to look at you."

He muttered something about birds and ground his heels into the dirt.

"What about birds?"

"One attacked me."

"Well, there aren't any birds out here now."

"You're sure of that."

"Of course I'm sure."

Disentangling himself, the boy stood up, groping for the door, and saying, as he emerged, "Why should a bird have it in for me? I think it was an eagle." He was tall and thin, almost frail, and dressed very oddly in a single-piece brown outfit.

"Can't you find anything to talk about except birds and snakes?" Mrs. Stramp said. "Who are you anyway? How'd you get here?"

"This is posted land," Effie reminded him.

The boy looked out over the river. "And I thought I was safe when I reached those pilings. Ha! I mean it was like a zoo out there."

Mrs. Stramp turned to Effie. "He must be out of his mind."

"House on hill," Effie said. "Big white house. Can you make it?"

She took one of his arms, Mrs. Stramp the other, and slowly they led him away from the river. He came willingly enough, but he came like someone who talked (about birds and snakes) as well as walked in his sleep, and when at one point along the way the shadow of a buzzard slid across the grass in front of them, he stopped dead. "I tell you, that bird's after me."

"Don't be such a fool," Mrs. Stramp said. "Either you keep quiet or we'll all lose our minds."

"I almost lost my head," the boy mumbled. "The way that bird zoomed down . . ."

"Now listen," Mrs. Stramp said, "do you want us to leave you right here, 'cause if you do just say one more word about birds and snakes."

Effie touched her on the shoulder — "Don't." How could they expect the boy to defend himself against animals and them too, all in the same day? She placed her hand on his thin shoulders, which

a lifetime of mistreatment, she imagined, had broken down, and smiling asked him to take a step forward.

"Now another," she said.

And soon they were walking again. The boy refused absolutely to go near Samuel's cows, which had stepped out of the woods, and this meant they had to go around the house and approach it from the rear. The back door was locked and while Mrs. Stramp went inside to open it, the boy sat down on the steps and looked around him bewildered.

"Where'd you say this was?"

"Samuel Miles' place," Effie told him.

"I mean what state."

"Why, Georgia!" Effie said.

"Hell, I thought I was further along than that."

"Were you swimming someplace?"

"I was swimming to get out of that river, ma'am."

"But where did you begin?"

"Florida. About an hour ago, I guess."

Effie shook her head. Poor boy, why should insanity have chosen him. Those nice clear eyes and smooth fair skin . . . No, it didn't seem fair, she thought, standing over him until Mrs. Stramp opened the door, whereupon, helping him to his feet, Effie said, "Let's go inside and rest."

Something resembling a path had been worn through the dying-ground of discarded furniture called the back porch. Rising under the eaves on one side were chairs, numerous broken tables, lamps and ruined suitcases; on the other, holding back a stack of old newspapers and magazines, stood a cushionless sofa. With a heavy groan the boy collapsed onto the bare springs.

"No!" Effie cried, trying to catch him, "upstairs."

But this was the end of the road for him. He opened one eye and looked up hazily.

"You might telephone the police and tell them where the wreckage is."

"Wreckage?" Mrs. Stramp stepped closer. "What's he talking about?"

The boy mumbled something to himself, rolled over and fell asleep.

"Do you know what he means?"

Effie shook her head, smiling. "No," she said, "but neither does he."

"I'm not so sure. All that garble about birds and snakes. It sounds fishy."

Effie wiped a spot of mud away from the boy's face. She couldn't get over how young and honest it was. "Something's after him," she said. "Something" — she wanted to say "like Samuel" but refrained — "something awful I know. The least we can do is to let him rest here a while. He looks hungry to me. No telling when they fed him last."

"They?" Mrs. Stramp inquired.

"Wherever he came from. He had to come from some place. Florida he says, but you can't believe that. An institution maybe." An idea had formed in her mind that after years of confinement the boy had squeezed through a window, slid down the drain, stumbled long dark miles and found himself at the river's edge with tireless dogs baying at his heels.

"The point is where does he go from here," Mrs. Stramp said, walking into the house.

A moment later she was back, spinning through the open kitchen door — "Samuel's home!"

Samuel! To Effie the word meant police, efficiency, wailing sirens, and cruel muscles stuffing the poor defenseless boy into a strait jacket. She cried, "Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Stramp. "He must have come back while we were gone."

There followed a moment of panic. Pushing past Effie, Mrs. Stramp lost her balance, and striking out blindly for something to steady herself, she came in contact with the magazines. Down they slid, by the dozens, and the boy who was sleeping in the path vanished from view.

Effie was struck dumb.

Mrs. Stramp, who had come to rest on her face at the top of the pile, turned over, blowing hair out of her mouth. "If Samuel hears him, he's done for!" she gasped, and began shoveling magazines off the boy's head. How quietly he lay there, how still! Now they saw why. His forehead carried a small lump over one brow, left there by the blow that had knocked him insensible.

So began an odd course of events; so began a friendship. Telling us about it, Effie grew excited at this stage of her story. For her it was the climax, the moment of revelation, when the unspoken word issued forth and the word was *yes* — Mrs. Stramp, who had but lately arrived on the Miles scene, Mrs. Stramp stout and worldly, who commanded a male's wisdom, having inherited it from her two husbands, Mrs. Stramp was on her side, on Effie's hitherto defenseless side drawn up around the boy's body, waiting for Samuel to attack. "Oh, Sara, dear Sara," Effie exclaimed, "she was wonderful!" And the boy, what about him, lying among the junk of a generation: wet, muddy, with a lump on his forehead — was he wonderful too? "Oh, yes, everything considered, he was wonderful too. You see, poor thing, he had no way of knowing that what we were doing was being done in his behalf. How could he, not knowing Samuel! After tying his arms and legs and after Sara had put the towel in his mouth . . ." (Here we sat forward on our chairs — "You mean you gagged him?") "To keep him from crying out when he came to, yes: to keep Samuel from hearing him. It was Sara's idea that when Samuel went to bed we would take him upstairs with us. Wonderful Sara! To think that after all those weeks of being with her I had never glimpsed her kind generous soul!" Enough of Sara. What about the boy? ("After you bound and gagged him . . .") "Well, he woke up; he began to thrash and kick something awful."

(You see he had no way of knowing that this thing which had happened to him had happened for his own good.)

So he complained.

"Hush, hush," Effie pleaded, "you've got to lie quiet."

Crude animal noises filtered through the towel as he pitched about on the rusty springs, so heedlessly that Effie dropped to her knees beside the sofa — "Please, please" — stroking his face — "please! There's someone here who mustn't hear you, an awful person." Round, rolling, terror-stricken eyes pitifully betrayed by her who now leaned over him, overcome, and kissed his forehead, whereupon he began to thrash with renewed vigor.

"Now look what you've done," Sara hissed.

"Don't," Effie said. "Please don't. It's for your own good, everything." She thought they should take the towel out of his mouth, but Sara shook her head and said, "No."

"He looks so worried."

"He'll look worse than that if Samuel gets hold of him."

The sun had dropped behind a bank of pink clouds, casting over the porch a hot lurid glow. Dinner time was approaching and somewhere within the house sat Samuel eying the clock. In time the boy wore himself out and lay still. Effie found a chair which she drew up beside him while Sara took down her apron from a hook near the kitchen door and tied it around her.

"I'll tell Samuel you aren't feeling well," she said, to which Effie replied, "You might blame something on me too; that always makes him feel good."

The boy moaned.

Effie said, "Please don't do that. We're only trying to help you. Won't you believe me?"

Again those coarse animal noises, less strident than before but no less painful to hear. Effie held his bound hands in hers, rubbing them. The air grew cool, rising off the river. The first stars appeared. He tried to say something.

"What?" Effie leaned closer.

There was another attempt then silence, followed by a despairing moan.

"If I remove the towel," Effie said, "will you promise not to make a sound?"

Not a sound, his eyes answered hopefully.

"And you won't tell Sara?"

Never.

When Effie had ungagged him, words rushed forth — "Undo my feet, lady, and let me go! How about it, huh? I haven't done anything to you, honest!"

"Whoever said you had?"

"Then turn me loose. What do you say?"

The boy was wild — round beseeching eyes, trembling voice, a pale wet mouth which trembled when he spoke.

"When Samuel goes to bed, we'll talk about it," Effie said

"Is he like you are?"

"Like I am?"

"You know . . ." But that was as far as he got before confusion overcame him. He said, "Just turn me loose, that's all."

"Where would you go?"

"Back to the river, anywhere."

"Birds and snakes," Effie reminded him.

"I'll take my chances. Just untie me. You won't be sorry. I'll send you other things to play with, dolls, games . . ."

Effie nodded and smiled. "You rest now. We'll play games when Samuel goes to bed."

The boy was silent for a moment; then he eyed her suspiciously and said, "Just what kind of game do you have in mind, lady?"

"Hide and Seek, Red Light, anything you want."

"Why don't we play now? I'll hide, you seek me."

"But Samuel might find you," Effie laughed.

"Oh, no he wouldn't."

"I don't know. He's awfully clever about finding things."

"He wouldn't find me."

"He will if you don't speak lower."

Fireflies drifted beyond the screening. Effie rolled the towel into a pillow and placed it under his head. She removed his shoes, then his socks, and drew a pan of water to wash his face. His eyes looked swollen and tired. It pained her to touch the lump on his forehead, a small lump, but nevertheless they had inflicted it upon him. The least she could do was make him comfortable. He seemed to have no objections and closed his eyes wearily while she massaged his temples. A light wind had sprung up, rustling the pecan tree beside the porch. Going round and round, her finger tips grew numb and her eyes heavy while herons roosted along the river bank and the boy said dreamily, "There's another game I've always liked. It's called 'Telephone the Police.' Ever hear of it. You pretend there's been an airplane crash and want the police to know where the pilot is."

"That sounds like an interesting game," Effie said. "Are you a pilot?"

"I think I am."

"Isn't that nice. Sleepy, pilot?"

"I'm tired."

"Then sleep. Maybe you'll dream of airplanes, lovely silver airplanes. Maybe one of them will be yours and you'll be zooming across the sky."

"But what if I crash?"

"Oh, you won't crash."

"But what if I do?"

"Whoever finds you will take you in. They'll look after you."

"Tie me up?"

"If it's for your own good they will."

"Will they ever turn me loose?"

"If you want them to."

"I want them to now."

"But you aren't dreaming."

"I think I am. Dreaming that a bird chases me out of the river and two old women tied me up and" — his voice gave out — "here I am."

"Here you are," Effie said, smiling because she did not know when she had felt quite so rested and quiet as she felt now, yes, and happy because through the boy she had found Sara: she had found a friend. No longer would she be alone with Samuel in the Miles Place Overlooking the Seven Mile Reach. Sara would be with her, and together — well, together they could do anything, anything, she thought, looking around for something to lay over the boy's shoulders. Finding nothing on the porch, she walked into the kitchen. Through a crack in the door she caught a glimpse of Samuel sitting at the far end of the dining room table; his white hair, his cast iron chin, his strong hooked nose were poised intently over the mouth of a portable radio while Sara, sitting across from him, looked at her plate and said nothing to interfere with the evening stock market report: such a ghastly scene that Effie shivered and turned away. As she did so a light flashed across the kitchen. A car had driven into the front yard. Drawing close to the window, Effie watched a man get out of the car and walk into the headlights, displaying the uniform of a policeman. She almost screamed: here came the snake, here came the pursuing bird!

Mumbling in his sleep, the boy said, "Got to get away . . ."

And so you will, Effie thought, and so you will, as she stuffed the towel in his mouth — "No sudden noises," she whispered — and freed his feet.

"Now stand up," she said with the doorbell ringing furiously. "Hurry!" She knew exactly what to do.

Half asleep he responded, as though conditioned by previous bad dreams. Here was another coming up. Why question it? He clubbed along behind her on bare leaden feet.

They crossed the backyard and went through an opening in the fence. Ahead lay the orchard, beyond that another fence and more trees sagging in the pale light of a half moon. Rotten apples breaking open under their feet released a sharp tingling odor. Frogs groaned in the distance. They slithered on. Splintered hips, the peril of old women, flashed across Effie's mind, but nothing, nothing, she felt, could break her bones this night.

"Not much further," she panted, pulling the boy through a gate and into a field where cows were grazing around a small frame shed. Dew lay on the roof, glistening in the moonlight.

"I used to come here when I was a girl," Effie said without any reason for saying it, and swinging back on rusty hinges, the door sounded as though it had not been opened since then. She drew him inside and shut the door. Small feet scampered away in the darkness.

"Mice," Effie assured him. "But we won't be here long. As soon as the policeman leaves we'll go back."

The boy squealed — a glimmer of insanity, Effie thought, showing through his feeble-mindedness — and began to stamp his feet.

"Shake your trousers!" Effie cried, thinking of mice.

He rushed against the door. He kicked it and tried to bite Effie's hand when he found it holding down the latch. Then he turned against the back wall where wood was stacked to the ceiling and assaulted it with all his force. Logs three feet long crashed down on his shoulders.

Effie had to dig him out.

"It's a wonder you don't hurt yourself carrying on like that," she said. "That policeman's not going to harm you."

The boy wouldn't move. He had had enough for one day. Logs on top of snakes, birds, and two old women had altogether subdued him, and he lay there quietly gasping while Effie hovered overhead. When his breathing had grown more regular, she slipped out of the door and locked it behind her.

By the time she reached the house, the policeman had gone and a light burned in Samuel's downstairs bedroom. For once in her life, she thought, she had put something over on him, and this gave her a curious sense of power. She crossed the backyard and ran happily up the steps. Sara was waiting in the kitchen.

"They must have done terrible things to him, Sara," Effie said,

recounting her adventure. "I just mentioned the word 'policeman' and he threw a fit."

Sara shook her head. "Sit down, Effie. I've got something to tell you."

There was a frightening note in her voice. Like the tolling of a fire bell, it announced disaster. "What's that, Sara?"

"He's a pilot."

"Who? That boy!" Nonsense.

"Boy nothing! He's a young man. Everybody for miles around is looking for him. His plane crashed further down the river."

"Oh, my goodness." Her voice whistled as she sat down and after a moment or two of stunned silence she said, "Does Samuel know?"

"Know that he's locked up here? Know that we bound and gagged him? Know that we captured him?"

Effie winced and nodded her head.

"Not yet, but by morning he will. All I can think of is how it will look in the papers: 'Women Hold Pilot Hostage.'"

"They would say that?"

"Of course they would. That's exactly what we've done."

"But we didn't mean to."

"It doesn't matter whether we meant it or not. The point is we did it and now have got to find some way of undoing it."

"Couldn't we just open the door to the woodshed and run? He doesn't know where he is."

"We told him, didn't we?"

"But how will he remember that? He was out of his head. Besides, if I were a pilot, I'd be ashamed for anyone to know that two old women had captured me."

"His pride might not be as large as yours, Effie."

"Oh, I think it is."

"All we can do is hope it is. Did you untie him?"

"I untied his feet."

"And his hands."

"No."

"We'll have to do that."

Walking back through the orchard, through the odor of rotten peaches and the sound of rustling leaves, they heard wailing whip-poorwills and boards breaking in the distance. "He must be trying to get out," Sara said, to which Effie, who had been thinking of how

she had pulled him through here in his bare feet, added, "He must think we're a little bit crazy."

Sara's reply: "If that's all he thinks I'm grateful."

"What else could he think?"

"We're two old women, Effie. He's a young man."

"Sara, he wouldn't dare!"

As they came out of the orchard into a patch of moonlight, a figure suddenly joined them, leaping over a fence. He seemed to turn in space, his bare ankles flashing like blades, and the next thing they knew he had gained the branches of a peach tree and pulled himself among the leaves.

"Stay away!" he snarled. "Both of you. Come one step nearer and I'll kick your heads off!"

"We were bringing you these," Effie said, holding out his shoes.

"Put 'em on the ground. I'm wise to your tricks now." Shrouded in leaves, he swayed to and fro, lean and fierce looking, more monkey than man, more man than boy. "Think you could hold me, did you!"

Sara said, "We were coming to untie you."

"Yes," Effie smiled, "you're free."

"You bet I'm free, lady, and I intend to stay that way. Now clear out!" He kicked at them, shaking the branches.

"Won't you please climb down and get your shoes?" Effie asked him. "There's something I want you to know."

"I'm listening."

"Not in a tree."

"I'd rather be in a tree than anywhere else on this place."

"Put the shoes down, Effie." This from Sara, who pointed to the fence. "We'll go stand over there."

"Further," the boy said. "Further still. Keep moving."

"We can't. There's a fence."

"Climb over it."

"You climb down. We've gone far enough."

The boy hesitated for a moment, then warily dropped to the ground. "All right," he said, pulling on his shoes, "I guess that does it. I'm off."

"Any place in particular?" Sara asked him.

"I'll find a road."

"Would you believe me if I told you where to find it?"

"I might."

"Beyond the orchard," she said, "you'll come to a gravel lane. Follow it through the woods."

The boy walked away. Walking behind him came Effie — "Watch out for quicksilver"; and behind Effie came Sara — "She means quicksand"; and the boy, glancing over his shoulders, began to walk faster.

"We could fix you a box of lunch," Effie called. Then: "Whatever you may think of us, don't think for a moment that we weren't thinking about you too."

The boy began to run.

Sara ran a little ways herself — "What she means is that we weren't thinking about ourselves."

Soon his outline faded among the trees, so quietly, so quickly, that neither of them was quite certain that the departure had really occurred and stood there in the wet grass waiting for something further to happen.

"But it never did," Effie said, looking at her watch. "I'm not going to miss my train, am I?"

"To hell with your train!" This from our Philadelphia-born father, ordinarily calm, who had edged into the living room without out knowing it — "Go on! What happened then?"

Effie smiled. "Oh, nothing," she said.

"You mean . . ."

"I mean I was right. The boy was too proud, too fine, to tell the authorities about our mistake. He said he had been lost. At least the newspapers said he had been lost."

"And Samuel never found out?"

"Oh, yes, we told him everything. Poor Samuel," she sighed, "he was in much the same fix as the boy. Too proud to admit we had put something over on him. He refused to believe us. He couldn't believe us and still have the last word, and the last word, you know, is something that Samuel can't do without, like some people can't do without drink, regardless of what it costs them. He told us to go to bed, that we were out of our minds. And that, of course, is what the boy thought too. Oh, men," she said, "they're all alike."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

JAMES BALDWIN, born in 1924, was educated in public schools in New York. He has worked in shipyards, factories, icehouses, restaurants; as day laborer, handyman, welder's assistant, shipping clerk, office boy, messenger, elevator boy, waiter and dishwasher — writing all the while. His articles and stories have appeared in many magazines, including *The Nation*, *The New Leader*, *Partisan Review*, *Commentary*, *Mademoiselle*, *Encounter*, and *The Reporter*, and for his writing Mr. Baldwin has received numerous awards and fellowships. His published books include a collection of essays entitled *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) and two novels, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) and *Giovanni's Room* (1956).

After several years of living and traveling in Europe, he has recently returned to this country, where he is engaged in finishing a third novel and a play, and looking forward to a long-projected historical novel.

JOHN BERRY was born in California. He attended both U.C.L.A. and U.S.C. and has taught at Viswa Bharati in India and at the University of Southern California. With his artist wife, Ynez Johnston, he lives in Santa Monica near the ocean. His stories and poems have appeared in numerous journals. His first novel, *Krishna Fluting*, published in October, 1959, received the first annual Macmillan Fiction Award. *Flight of Crows*, a collection of stories, tales and paradoxes, will be published in 1962.

ALFRED CHESTER, a native of Brooklyn, is the author of many short stories. His work has appeared widely, notably in *Botteghe Oscure*, *The Paris Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and the *Evergreen Review*. His first published novel, *Jamie Is My Heart's Desire*, written with the aid of a Guggenheim Fellowship, appeared early in 1958, and a collection of his short stories will be published later this year. Mr. Chester is an associate editor of the *Provincetown Review*.

WILLIAM H. GASS was born in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1924, but has lived most of his life in Warren, Ohio, and other parts of the Midwest. He holds degrees from Kenyon College and Cornell and presently teaches philosophy at Purdue University. With his wife and their three children, he now lives in Brookston, Indiana.

IVAN GOLD, a native New Yorker, was graduated from Columbia College in 1953 and made his first appearance in *The Best American Short Stories* the following year. After completing his military service, he spent a year in Japan, teaching English and studying Japanese. In 1957 he entered the University of London and obtained a B.A. Honors Degree in modern Japanese there in 1959. Since that time he has been working, writing, and traveling extensively in Europe.

WILLIAM GOYEN, Texas born and educated, received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from the Rice Institute in Houston, in 1937 and 1939. Since the end of the war he has been writing and teaching and has lived in all four corners of the United States. His stories have appeared in many major magazines, and in 1950 he published his first novel, *The House of Breath*. His other books include two collections of short stories, *Ghost and Flesh* (1952) and *The Faces of Blood Kindred* (1960), and the novel, *In a Farther Country*. He is now working on a play and a nonfiction collection of biographical sketches to be entitled *Six Women*. Mr. Goyen teaches fiction writing and conducts a playwright's workshop at The New School in New York City.

MARK HARRIS, a professor at San Francisco State College, was born in Mt. Vernon, New York, and is the holder of various academic degrees, including a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Minnesota. He has been writing steadily since 1946 and his stories and articles have appeared in many publications. He is the author of several novels, including *Wake Up, Stupid*, *A Ticket for a Seamstress*, and *Something About a Soldier*. Several years ago he had a Fulbright Grant to teach in Hiroshima, and with the aid of a Ford Grant he is currently at work on a play. Mr. Harris and his wife have two children.

KAATJE HURLBUT, wife of newspaper man John Schoolfield, notes that "after graduation from a public high school, she was briefly exposed to a university and a college, but received her education at home in the quickening climate of a diverse library and an independent, self-contained family." Although she began to write when still a child, it was not until after her marriage that she started writing seriously. Some of her work was included in *40 Best Stories from Mademoiselle* and her stories have appeared in *The Literary Review*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Mademoiselle*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Redbook*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. With their three children, the Schoolfields live in Connecticut and spend their summers in Virginia.

THEODORE JACOBS was born in Long Beach, New York, and attended the Horace Mann School and Yale University. He received his M.D. degree from the University of Chicago, interned at Kings County Hospital in New York City, and took his residency training in psychiatry at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in New York, where he is now affiliated. In addition to "A Girl for Walter," here reprinted from *Mufiny*, Dr. Jacobs has published two stories in *Harper's* and will be represented in the volume *Humor from Harper's* to be published this fall. Dr. Jacobs practices psychiatry in New York.

MARY LAVIN, the author of many short stories, lives on a farm in County Meath, Ireland, and has recently bought and converted a derelict coach house in Dublin. A widow with three daughters, Miss Lavin was born in East Walpole, Massachusetts. After attending elementary school there, she was sent to Ireland to be educated and received her M.A. from the National University of Ireland in Dublin. In 1943 she was awarded the Black and Tan Memorial Prize and last year was the holder of a Guggenheim Fellowship. A collection of her stories, *Selected Stories*, many of them taken from her previous books, was published in 1959.

JACK LUDWIG, born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, received his B.A. from the University of Manitoba and his Ph.D. from the University of California. After teaching at Williams College in Massachusetts, Bard College in New York, and the University of Minnesota, he is now on the faculty of the State University of New York. His articles and stories have been published in *Commentary*, *The New Republic*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Midstream*, and *The Noble Savage*, and in 1960 he won a Longview Foundation Fiction Award. His first novel, *Confusions*, will be published later this year. Mr. Ludwig is co-founder and co-editor of the semiannual magazine *The Noble Savage*.

WILLARD MARSH, at the time of his last appearance in *The Best American Short Stories*, in 1953, was living in Mexico, "where he and his wife went to stretch their finances while Mr. Marsh completed a novel." He now reports that "that novel, like another attempt since, kept falling apart into short stories." In 1958 the Marshes returned to the United States so that Mr. Marsh could take a belated B.A. and an M.A. at the University of Iowa. Since completing his work at Iowa, Mr. Marsh has been teaching creative writing at Winthrop College in South Carolina, and this fall will join the English faculty at the University of Southern California at Los Angeles. His work has been widely published and is represented in numerous anthologies: *The Antioch Review Anthology*, *Best Saturday Evening Post Stories 1954*, *Science-Fiction: The Year's Greatest Science-Fiction and Fantasy*, and *Prize Stories, 1957: The O. Henry Awards*. "Sooner or later," he says, "I am going to write a short story that turns into a novel."

ST. CLAIR MCKELWAY was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, and educated in public schools in Washington, D.C. After one year of high school, he went to work on the *Washington Times* as an office boy, became a reporter, and was assistant city editor when he left Washington to go to New York, by way of Philadelphia, in 1925. He worked as a reporter on the old *New York World*, later the *Herald Tribune*, then spent five years in the Orient where for three years he was editor of the *Bangkok Daily Mail*, returning to the *Herald Tribune* in 1933, and thence to *The New Yorker* the same year. During the Second World War he served in the Air Force. He is the author of *Gossip: The Life and Times of Walter Winchell*, and *True Tales from the Annals of Crime and Rascality*. Mr. McKelway was for many years one of the editors of *The New Yorker* as well as a contributor, and is now a member of the writing staff.

JEANNIE OLIVE, born and brought up in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, studied at Western Carolina College and graduated from the University of North Carolina. Mrs. Olive's husband is a mycologist and professor of botany at Columbia University. They have traveled extensively and once lived for six months in Tahiti. The Olives spend their summers in a cabin in the Southern Appalachians and consider themselves "about half New Yorker, and half hillbilly." "Society" is Mrs. Olive's first published story.

TILLIE OLSEN grew up in Nebraska, where her formal education stopped "almost through high school." She has worked most of the time since, in recent years as a typist and transcriber. A San Franciscan since 1933, she has four daughters, aged thirteen to twenty-eight, and includes among present occupations "children and helping to support them." Mrs. Olsen has published stories in *Pacific Spectator*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *New World Writing*, and made her first appearance in *The Best American Short Stories* in 1957. Her story "Tell Me a Riddle" won first place in *Prize Stories*, 1961: *The O. Henry Awards*.

WILLIAM PEDEN is director of the University of Missouri Press, professor of English, and in charge of the writing program at that university. He is author of a half-dozen books, including *Increase Mather's Testimony*, and *Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. He recently compiled an anthology, *29 Stories*, published in 1960. Professor Peden currently holds a Guggenheim Fellowship and is on leave from the University of Missouri.

THOMAS PYNCHON has had short stories and articles in *Epoch*, *New World Writing*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Noble Savage*, and *Aerospace Safety*. A novel is forthcoming on the Lippincott list.

SAMUEL SANDMEL is Provost and Professor of Bible and Hellenistic Literature at the Cincinnati School of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, his alma mater. A native of Dayton, Ohio, he attended public schools in St. Louis. His rabbinic degree is from Hebrew Union College; his B.A. from the University of Missouri, and his Ph.D. degree from Yale.

In addition to many articles, Dr. Samuel has written *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* and *Philo's Place in Judaism*, both published in 1956, and *The Genius of Paul* in 1958. His latest work, *The Hebrew Scripture*, will be published early in 1962. Dr. Sandmel is President of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, one of the constituents of the American Council of Learned Societies.

PETER TAYLOR is a member of the English faculty at Ohio State University, where he teaches a course in creative writing. His stories have appeared in the literary quarterlies and in *The New Yorker*. His books include *A Long Fourth and Other Stories*, *A Woman of Means*, *The Widows of Thornton*, *Tennessee Day* in St. Louis, and *Happy Families Are All Alike*. Mr. Taylor was born in Trenton, Tennessee, in

1917, and attended Vanderbilt University and Kenyon College. He and his wife have two children.

ELLINGTON WHITE, a native of Anderson, South Carolina, was graduated from Kenyon College in 1950 and received his M.A. from Johns Hopkins University in 1954. He has earned his living in a variety of ways, more recently teaching at the University of Richmond and at Mississippi Southern College in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. This summer he is moving to Farmville, Virginia, where he will be an assistant professor in the English Department at Longwood College. Mr. White's stories and essays have appeared in *Sewanee Review*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, *New Story Magazine*, *Georgia Review*, and *The Provincial* as well as in the anthologies *The Lasting South* and *South*. He is presently at work on a novel.

THE YEARBOOK OF THE
AMERICAN SHORT STORY
JANUARY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 1960

ROLL OF HONOR

1960

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- ANGELL, ROGER
Côte d'Azur. New Yorker, June 11.
- ANGOFF, CHARLES
Rebecca. Southwest Review, Winter.
- BALDWIN, JAMES
This Morning, This Evening, So
Soon. Atlantic, Sept.
- BEERS, LORNA
The Betrothed. Harper's Magazine,
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- BERRY, JOHN
The Listener. New World Writing,
No. 16.
- BLAZER, SAMUEL
The Fire-Eater. Paris Review, No.
22.
- BURGERS, JACKSON
The Magician. Atlantic, June.
- CARTER, JOSEPH
The Third Martini. Playboy, Sep-
tember.
- CHAY, MARIE
It's All World. Southwest Review,
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- CHESTER, ALFRED
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- CONROY, FRANK
Spring for Alison. Evergreen Review,
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- COWELL, EUGENE I., JR.
The End of Christmas. Mutiny,
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- DANIELS, SALLY
The Victims. Sewanee Review,
Spring.
- DAWKINS, CECIL
The Buffalo Ranch. Paris Review,
No. 22.
- DEASY, MARY
The Sword of Justice. Virginia
Quarterly Review, Autumn.
- DETHIER, VINCENT G.
Haboob. Kenyon Review, Summer.
- DICKSON, J. W.
The Legend of Able Seaman Pickett.
Atlantic, January.
- ELLISON, RALPH
The Roof, the Steeple and the
People. Quarterly Review of Lit-
erature, X:3.
And Hickman Arrives. The Noble
Savage, No. 1.
- FONTAINE, ROBERT
How My Love Was Sawed in Half.
Atlantic, June.
- GASS, W. H.
The Love and Sorrow of Henry
Pimber. Accent, Spring.
- GILGUN, JOHN F.
A Penny for the Ferryman. New
World Writing, No. 16.
- GOLD, IVAN
The Nickel Misery of George Wash-
ington Carver Brown. Esquire,
March.
- GOYEN, WILLIAM
A Tale of Inheritance. Southwest
Review, Winter.

- GRAU, SHIRLEY ANN
The Man Below. Atlantic, September.
- GUTWILLIG, ROBERT
The Actress and I. Gentlemen's Quarterly, June.
- HARRIS, MARK
The Self-Made Brain Surgeon. The Noble Savage, No. 1.
- HAZEL, ROBERT
And I Shall Rest. Southwest Review, Winter.
- HOWARD, MAUREEN
Bridgeport Bus. Hudson Review, Winter.
- HURLBUT, KAATJE
The Vestibule. The Literary Review, Spring.
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An Afternoon Off. *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, April.

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GORDIMER, NADINE

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The Easter Outing. *Atlantic*, June.

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The Woman from Mexico. *Partisan Review*, Winter.

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